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The Normality of Abnormality: Extraordinary Measures and the Militarization of Public Security in El Salvador Post-2016

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Extraordinary Measures and the Militarization

of Public Security in El Salvador Post-2016

by

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In 1992, the U.S.-backed Salvadoran military and the leftist guerillas signed the Chapultepec Peace Accords which put an end to a 12-year civil war that resulted in 75,000 deaths, 9,000 forced disappearances and half a million internal displacements. Around 85% of the reports made by survivors of the civil war attributed the violence they experienced to state agents, paramilitary groups and death squads[1]. In a 'postwar' era, militarization of El Salvador has remained an institutional open wound. In 2008, the right-wing ARENA[2] party signed a decree that established the participation of members of the Fuerza Armada de El Salvador (FAES) in civil security. In 2009, six months after the historic victory of the leftist Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN), the recently elected President Mauricio Funes (2009-2014) signed a decree that established the continuation of joint police-military task forces in public security. Around this time, the military budget and funding increased in conjunction with more frequent reports of abuse of authority and human rights violations by the police and military. This institutional collaboration between the FAES and the Policía Nacional Civil (PNC) was justified under the notion that "the Armed Force will support the national police [in the

[1] Roberto D'Aubuisson, School of the Americas (SOA) graduate, co-founded the dead squads. In 1981, he founded the right-wing ARENA party and became its first leader. After transnational activist and political mobilization, the SOA changed its name to the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Operation (WHINSEC). WHINSEC continues to train soldiers worldwide in counterinsurgency tactics which include torture, disappearances, and assassinations.

[2] Alianza Republicana Nacionalista (Nationalist Republican Alliance)

event that] the resources and efforts of the police are insufficient to reduce crime."[3] Despite this haunting legacy of a repressive Salvadoran military *and* the antagonistic history the military has had with revolutionary leftist groups, the FMLN government has relied on joint police-military task forces to ensure public security, and paradoxically, promote civil security and 'peace.' That the FMLN has re-ignited the FAES in public security is a contradiction. My thesis will discuss this paradox that speaks to the larger economic and societal structures that uphold militarization in El Salvador.

Keywords: Central America, Postwar El Salvador, Militarization, Police Violence, Peaceful War, FMLN, Extraordinary Measures

[3] See Decree No. 60

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Acronyms

18 ST: Barrio 18
ANSENAL: Agencia Nacional de Servicios Especiales de El Salvador
ARENA: Alianza Republicana Nacionalista de El Salvador FES
ATF: The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives
CISPES: Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador
ERP: Ejército Revolucionario del Pueblo
FESPAD: Fundación de Estudios para la Aplicación del Derecho
FGR: Fiscalía General de la República
FMLN: Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberación Nacional
FPL: Fuerzas Populares de Liberación Farabundo Martí
GANA: Grand Alliance for National Unity (Gran Alianza por la Unidad Nacional)
GN: Guardia Nacional
GOES: Gobierno Salvadoreño
GPR: General Prosecutor of the Republic
IUDOP: Instituto Universitario de Opinión Pública
MS 13: Mara Salvatrucha 13
MJSP: Ministerio de Justicia y Seguridad Pública
ORDEN: Organización Democrática Nacionalista
PCS: Partido Comunista Salvadoreño
PRTC: Partido Revolucionario de los Trabajadores Centroamericanos
PDDH: Procuraduría para la Defensa de los Derechos Humanos
PH: Policía de Hacienda
PNC: Policía Nacional Civil
PN: Policía Civil
RN: Resistencia Nacional
SIN: Sistema Nacional de Inteligencia
SPASS: Servicio Social Pasionista
SOA: School of the Americas
SOAW: School of the Americas Watch
UCA: Universidad Centroamericana "José Simeón Cañas"
UN: United Nations
WHINSEC: Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Operacion
WOLA: Washington Office on Latin America

Acronyms (Militarized State Agencies)

ANSP: Academia Nacional de Seguridad Pública (National Academy of Public Safety)
FAES: Fuerzas Armadas de El Salvador (Armed Forces of El Salvador)
FES: Fuerzas Especializadas de Reacción (Specialized Reaction Forces)
FIRT: Fuerzas de Intervención y Recuperación de Territorios (Territory Intervention and Recovery Forces)
FTCH: Fuerzas de Tareas "Centro Histórico" ("Centro Historico" Task Forces)
GOPES: Grupo de Operación Especial (Special Operation Group)
GRP: Grupo de Reacción Policial (Police Reaction Group)
PNC: Policía Nacional Civil (National Civil Police)
STO: Sección Táctica Operativa (Tactical Operation Section)
UTEP: Unidad Táctica Especializada Policial (Specialized Police Tactical Unit)

This thesis was written with the upmost respect to the families whose relatives have been psychologically wounded, harassed, imprisoned, raped, tortured, forcibly disappeared and killed by the National Civil Police and the Armed Forces of El Salvador. El dolor e indignación de estas familias son validos.

Special thanks to Verónica Reyna from the Servicio Social Pasionista (SPASS) for intellectually supporting my work and for her admirable passion for truth and justice.

Source: Dibujos Insurgentes, Instagram @ciudadana.z

INTRODUCTION
The Abnormal Normality of Militarized Policing: The Increase of Violence in El Salvador and its Causes

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Scholars in the social sciences have theorized violence as an attempt to understand and explain tensions among individuals and collectives. For instance, one eminent scholar in anthropology, Phillipe Bourgois, distinguished between four types of violence, specifically structural, political, symbolic, and everyday violence. Johan Galtung's *structural violence* (1969), rooted in the schools of thoughts of anti-colonialism and black liberation (Fanon 1961) and Catholic liberation theology (Sobrino 1995) in Latin America, pertain to the political and economic organization of society that creates the conditions for political violence, poverty, and exploitation (of the people and natural resources) to exist, thus generating 'physical and emotional distress' (Bourgois 2001). *Political violence*, according to Bourgois is "directly and purposefully administered in the name of a political ideology, movement, or state such as the physical repression of dissent by the army or the police as well as its converse, popular armed struggle against a repressive regime" (2001). Historically, political violence has been sponsored by nation-states and executed among society through the everyday use of coercion to attain political means. *Everyday violence*, as suggested by Nancy Scheper-Hughes (1992, 1996, 1997), sheds light to the "'peace-time crimes,' the 'small wars and invisible genocides' that plague the poor around the world" (Bourgois 2001). This type of violence works in the micro-level and constitutes the routine, daily practices of violence and violent intrapersonal interactions which result in the normalization of terror. In a like manner, Jesuit psychologist Ignacio Martín-Baró stressed that the normalization of violence could be conceived as a "normal abnormality," specifically when referring to chronic burdens and difficulties (Martín-Baró 1994 qtd in

Menjívar 2011). In the context of political violence and its everyday manifestations, normal abnormality is a term used to express the process whereby the abnormal social relations caused by violence become normal and accepted as *de facto* solutions to ideological differences and social tension.

"The most potent weapon in the hands of the oppressor
is the mind of the oppressed."
Steve Biko

While Bourgois posed that there are four types of violence, I would argue that all these types of violence are guided by ideology, particularly one that seeks to create submissive bodies and systems of domination and oppression. Namely, symbolic violence facilitates systems of domination because both the oppressor and oppressed uphold such systems. Following sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (2004), one can define *symbolic violence* as the internalization of oppression (i.e. hierarchies, inequality) by the dominated, through a process of misrecognition, which becomes rationalized, legitimized, and materialized with the consent of the dominated. "In this conceptualization," sociologist Cecilia Menjívar notes, "'the dominated apply categories constructed from the point of view of the dominant to the relations of domination, thus making it appear as natural. This can lead to systematic self-depreciation, even self-denigration'" (Bourdieu 2004 qtd. in Menjívar 2011). In other words, the oppressed agent is complicit in his or her own oppression. In a like manner, a similar conception of how differentials of power permeate the social sphere was pioneered by Marxist philosopher, Antonio Gramsci. Gramsci defined hegemony as "a socio-political situation in which the philosophy and practice of a society fuse or are in equilibrium; an order in which a certain way of life and thought is dominant, in which one concept of reality is diffused throughout society in all its institutional

and private manifestations, informing with its spirit all taste, morality, customs, religious and political principles, and all social relations" (Gramsci qtd. in Leiva 2016). This reference to hegemony suggests that power is gained not just through violence and coercion (the use of force), but also ideologically through consent, or permission from the dominated to be oppressed. In other words, hegemony is a socio-political and cultural process whereby the oppressed identifies and complies with the demands of the oppressors, and help maintain the status quo; thus, contributing to her or his own oppression. Arguably, all four types of violence, as suggested by Bourgois, are present in the history of war and *peaceful war* in El Salvador. Throughout my thesis, I maintain that a 'peaceful war' refers to the war-like violence existent in 'postwar' El Salvador, as well as its manifestations through U.S. influence toward dehumanization and militarized policing.

As previously stated, even though all four forms of violence have been present in the history of El Salvador, I will only focus on state violence for the purpose of this thesis. But first, I will briefly lay the foundation in which state violence has found its expressions in Salvadoran society: structural violence. *Structural violence* functions at the macro level. Notably, although exploitation and poverty had existed in El Salvador before the 1960s and 1970s, these were decades when the domination led by the oligarchic-military dictatorship was unbearable for the poor sectors of society. These conditions of extreme poverty led to the organization of popular movements who sought to end the oppression of the capitalist ruling class and U.S. imperialism over the region. However, any act of dissent against the ruling class was faced with repression; but in response, the repression led to the formation of armed popular movements, including the Fuerzas Populares de Liberación Farabundo Martí (FPL), Ejército Revolucionario del Pueblo (ERP), Resistencia Nacional (RN), Partido Comunista Salvadoreño (PCS), and Partido

Revolucionario de los Trabajadores Centroamericanos (PRTC)—who in 1980 unified to fight under the vanguard of the Frente Farabundo Martín para la Liberación Nacional (FMLN). Consequently, El Salvador underwent a civil war which was fought between the U.S.-backed military and the leftist FMLN guerrillas between 1980 and 1992. The civil war resulted in 75,000 casualties. During this period, the United States trained Salvadorans soldiers at the School of the Americas (Gill 2004) and sent 6 billion US dollars in aid (Abrego 2014) to strengthen the military and repress popular uprisings or the potential of such. In this previous example, structural violence was articulated as the domination of the capitalist land-owning oligarchy whose interest were backed by state apparatuses such as the military and the police. Notably, the United States played a role in maintaining the domination of various sectors of Salvadoran society for they benefited greatly from the oppression of working-class Salvadorans as well as U.S. economic and political domination of the Central American region.

In 1992, both the military and the FMLN guerrillas signed the Chapultepec Peace Accords in Mexico. By the end of the civil war, in addition to the 75,000 casualties, 9,000 were forcibly disappeared (Portillo 2000, 249), half a million were internally displaced, and "for the first time in Salvadoran history, people migrated en masse to the United States" (Abrego 2014). 1992 was a year that marked a historic transition from an armed conflict to 'democracy' and 'peace.' For the first time in the history of the country, people could vote for leaders that came from their struggles and represented their interests. However, the move toward democratization did not necessarily put an end to structural problems. Even though the country established a democratic nation-state, many believe that the peace accords did not transform the socio-economic conditions that generated the civil war in the first place. Indeed, poverty and violence are still relevant today. As a matter of fact, since the signing of the peace accords, at least 90,594

people have violently lost their lives (see Table X). Based on these statistics on post-war casualties, arguably the 75,000 casualties during the 12-year period of the civil war have been surpassed by a 26-year period of a 'peaceful democracy.' Precisely, my analysis of state violence and human rights abuses is contextualized within this postwar period, distinctly post-2016 when the extraordinary measures were implemented as the leading public security legislature. The conceptualization of violence in times of 'peace' is important for it highlights that the systems of oppression and domination that existed prior to and during the Salvadoran civil war are still existent today; only today, violence is articulated as a necessary means to achieve publis security and peace. The contradiction here is that the state apparatuses used to promote peace, such as the police and military, are merely perpetuating the same old systems of domination whereby a nation-state claims the right to kill the underserving class through state violence and with impunity. My thesis makes an intervention by arguing that the security policies in El Salvador are sources of insecurity. As a matter of fact, this introduction to my thesis on state violence offers tentative empirical support of the above argument by providing an analysis of the human rights violations executed directly by state agents (i.e. law enforcement, army) and facilitated by political leaders. In this thesis, I will only focus on a public security policy called the extraordinary measures that the leftist FMLN implemented in 2016. Along these lines, I conceptualize political violence as the human rights violations and abuse of authority by the National Civilian Police and Armed Forces, including extrajudicial killings and forced disappearances as well as other forms of physical and psychological abuse such as torture and death threats.

Table 1: Homicides in El Salvador from 1980-2018

Year	Homicides	Source
1980-1992	75,000	United Nations (1992)
1992-1994	---	Medicina Legal was established in 1999, hence it has no records of homicides between years 1992-1993. Source: Ingeniero Juan Pablo Velázquez, Colaborador Técnico Departamento de Gestión de Información, Medicina Legal. (2018).
1994-2009	50,000	Mijango (2013)
2009-2011	12,758	Servicio Social Pasionista (2014)
2012*-2013	5,093	Servicio Social Pasionista (2014)
2014-2015	10,568	Servicio Social Pasionista (2017)
2016	4,881	Procuraduría para la defensa de los Derechos Humanos (2017)
2017	3,954	FESPAD (2018)
2018	3,340	Medicina Legal (2018)
Total	165,594	

*dialogo, "tregua" entre pandillas. In this year, murder rates decreased from 14 homicides daily to 5.5 homicides daily.

Positionality: The Personal is Political

As a daughter of Salvadoran immigrants, an immigrant from El Salvador, and a transnational Salvadoran activist who has built community both in El Salvador and in the United States, I recognize the importance of articulating the violence that creates conditions of poverty, insecurity, displacement, and psychosocial trauma which are causing real material impacts in the lives of many of my family, friends, and the Central American community at large. This thesis is an attempt to complicate definitions of peace amidst a postwar period. Many Salvadorans, like many of us who are spectators or active agents of political processes, may sometimes adopt polarized mentalities and assume that politics are black and white, left and right. Yet, forget that we ourselves embody contradictions, and therefore political processes will too. With the end of a 20-year-long right-wing leadership, 2009 was the year of great promise for el pueblo Salvadoreño, the people who so passionately fought for justice, peace, and an end to oligarchic ruling. For some, this promise has been fulfilled as the leftist political leadership has made

structural advances in the Salvadoran economy and politics. However, for others who are critical of the 'Right-Hand' of the state (Bourdieu qtd. in Mueller 2016), the 2009 historic election marked a year of both promise and contradictions. Returning to the main argument of my thesis, this introduction offers tentative empirical support of the above argument by providing an analysis of the human rights violations executed directly by the military and police, and highlights how such violations have been facilitated by political leaders and legislatures. In this thesis, I will only focus on the policies on public security that the leftist FMLN implemented since 2009, namely the medidas extraordinarias. Although some may argue that this work is a *critique* of the left, to them I say that as a leftist community and student organizer and at-the-border sympathizer with the Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberación Nacional, this analysis is an *auto-crítica* about the contradictions we, social justice fighters, encounter in our political practice.

To make it clear, I am not dismissing the progress the Salvadoran left has made in ten years of political leadership (2009-2019), and I am neither destabilizing the left nor defaming political leaders. What I am doing is offering a response to the left's support for militarization and aggressive policing which has led to the violation of human rights, trauma, and suffering among poor sectors of society. Perhaps this thesis can serve as a reflective piece to those interested in analyzing the cultural and political conditions that led to the rise of the right-wing in the 2019 presidential elections. As a matter of fact, in the recent presidential elections held on February 3, 2019, after two consecutive executive victories the FMLN only received 14.40% of the votes, while the right-wing ARENA party gained 31.72% of the votes, and GANA, the emergent right-wing party led by right-wing populist Nayib Bukele[4], won the majority of the

[4]A few facts about Nayib Bukele: Nayib is of Palestenian descent but actively supports the Israeli state. He is the owner of Yamaha El Salvador, making him one of the wealthiest men in El Salvador. Bukele rose to the public eye

votes with a 53.10%. In this sense, one can argue that the FMLN, who had previously won two consecutive presidential elections, is now under pressure to re-examine its governance, including its stand on public security. With this thesis, I intend to invite the Salvadoran left to continue to do the work of auto-crítica pertaining to their personal positions in matters of public security and militarization.

It is precisely here where my contribution lies: since the 2009 elections, the leftist FMLN has given power to the armed forces to secure citizens and combat gang-related crime and violence. It is imperative to acknowledge that prior to 2009, the right-wing ARENA[5] party had implemented Heavy Hand (2003) and Super Heavy Hand (2004) policies that arguably manufactured the gang phenomenon through the criminalization of young men, stigmatization of poor communities, and mass incarceration. Moreover, in 2008, ARENA signed a decree that established the participation of soldiers in matters of civil security (Decree No. 60. Executive Branch of the Republic of El Salvador). The signing of this decree showcases that the militarization of public security did not start with the Funes' administration in 2009. However, it established the legal and ideological conditions whereby the subsequent government would rely

due to the FMLN's desire to target the middle class, a sector the party had not succesfully tapped into. Prior to running for office, he became mayor of Nuevo Cuscatlan, a middle-class municipal, and gained recognition for the installation of street lights. He never considered himself a leftist, and publicly advocates for free markets. Not surprisingly, he supports regime change in Venezuela, and he would make El Salvador the 17th country in the world to recognize that other guy as President of Venezuela, foolishly placing El Salvador right back into its former place as a lackey for the Empire. Nayib has close ties to The OAS and Luis Amalgro, who has actively sought to promote the US's imperial agenda in Latin America, and who is very clearly a CIA agent. Moreover, Nayib was kicked out of the FMLN for his repeated attacks on the party, particularly against women, whom he is known to target. He then joined GANA, a right-wing party created by former ARENA members in 2010 including some that were accused of corruption, and ran as president with this party. His platform was largely based on promoting anti-corruption, while never proposing a solution for the age-old contradiction of any and every form of political system. He was accused of plagarizing sections of the FMLN's plan de gobierno. In his plan de gobierno, he proposes building an international airport and a train that goes along the coast. He has not mentioned how these projects will be funded, but there are only two possibilities: (a) through cutting the FMLN governments' social programs, which he calls "wasteful" or (b) by courting U.S. and European capital. This analysis was produced by Salvadoran activists and intellectuals who founded and contribute to the Instagram page @ Salvisbelike_

[5] Alianza Republicana Nacionalista (Nationalist Republican Alliance).

on for projects on civil security. Lastly, in 2015 the right-wing judicial court declared gangs as terrorist groups through the passing of the Special Law Against Terrorist Acts. All these right-wing-sponsored legislatures set the stage for the security policies post-2009 under the lefist leadership. Since the Funes' administration, the FMLN governments (2009-2014 and 2014-2019) have increasingly deployed soldiers in joint-task forces with the police to weaken the organizing structure of gangs, strengthen security inside of prisons, and reduce gang-related crime and violence in the streets. The point I am trying to make is that the militarization of public security was not just an effort from the FMLN to achieve peace, and perhaps win electoral votes; rather it the militarization of public security under leftist governances must be historically contextualized and conceptualized. So why did the FMLN returned to militarized policing when their leadership were at some point in history victims of militarized violence? This thesis seeks to provide a reflection to this question.

Moreover, although many Salvadorans would argue that militarized policing is the only solution to gang violence, others have outspokenly criticized the subsequent effects caused by militarized policing, including the violation of human rights. For this reason, my thesis offers a critique to militarized policing and it becomes on itself a denuncia to the abuse of authority, institutional impunity, and psychological trauma that are carried out by the Armed Forces and the National Civilian Police. Most importantly, the denuncia seeks to hold the United States and the Salvadoran nation-state accountable for the lives lost in the so-called 'guerra contra las pandillas' (war against gangs) whereby countless of civilians are unjustly killed at the hands of state agents, namely the national police and armed forces.

The Militarization of Public Security: Manufacturing Civilian Insecurity and the Militarization Against Collective Action

So why should you care? Even though the re-militarization of public security has been designed to target gang members and weaken the gang structure, the power to abuse and kill that has been given to the armed forces and national police can have detrimental effects for Salvadoran society as a whole. While joint-task forces have predominantly gone after gangs, state agents have also attacked non-gang members, that is, Salvadorans who do not belong to a gang. In this sense, state agents have physically and psychologically abused as well as murdered gang members (men and women who have been jumped into a gang and are active in their 'membership'), those who *appear* to be members of a gang (including men and women who have tattoos, piercings, or live in certain neighborhoods), those who are not in a gang, but whose family members and loved ones are active gang members, and anyone who is not a state agent or a member of the Salvadoran middle class or elite. In other words, anyone but the elite can be a victim of state violence in El Salvador in the context of the extraordinary measures. In short, if you are not a member of the middle class or elite, then my thesis concerns you. As an illustration of the argument I have forwarded thus far, if you type "soldados El Salvador abuso" on your YouTube search, you will come across videos taken by civilians that show soldiers and police publicly beat up, harass, and psychologically abuse young men under the presumption that they belong to a gang. One common form of such political violence are the verbal abuses directed at the women who so often challenge the agents' authority as they visibly abuse their male relatives. In fact, a YouTube video titled "Policia le pegan y disparan a mujer en el salvador esta es la realidad del pais ¡¡¡" shows a police officer firing his gun at a woman who was protesting the arrest and beating of her loved one.

In these conditions, it is no surprise that in the fall of 2017, students from the National University of El Salvador protested the militarization of public security. On the day of the rally, student carried banners with the words, "Less Soldiers More Education," "More Arts Less Arms," "I do not want your militarist harassment," "More Education Less Repression" and "1 Tank = $5,000,000 = 16,666,67 minimum salaries." When asked why he was supporting the rally, one of the students stressed, "We are not against the security of students, rather we are against militarization… Violence and repression [against the youth] are not the solution." Another student expressed, "Us the youth who… are university students when we head back to our homes, the police stops us, mistreats us, and sexually harasses women. Believe me, it is not safe. Some people say they feel safer, but they must understand that behind the militarization, police, and soldiers in the streets, there is much more that can happen, [including] the violation of human rights."[6] The students are not mistaken in their analysis. In fact, I have spoken to social justice activists about the militarization of public security, and their analysis coincides with that of the university students.

In 2015, during my role as an intern in the Committee in Solidarity for the People of El Salvador (CISPES) in Washington, DC, I spoke to a visiting Salvadoran activist about the increase of military funding. While my analysis aimed to critique the dehumanization of gang members, the activist stressed that her concern with militarization is that now anyone who seems to be a threat to the state can be labeled as terrorist, and therefore violence and repression can be justified against them. Similarly, in 2018 when I attended a workshop organized by Sister Cities in Austin, Texas and facilitated by Salvadoran environmental activists, I expressed my concern about the violation of human rights committed by state agents. In response to my comment, the

[6] For more, visit: Voces contra la militarización de la capital https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EBrVxg7YK9Q

activist said to me that she was surprised to see a military tank in broad daylight in a park in the metropolitan area of San Salvador. Consequently, she expressed that in her eyes the purpose of the militarization of public security is not just to arrest gang members, but repress collective action such as the occupation of parks, streets, and buildings, which are all peaceful actions that can now be interpreted as terrorism. So, if you are a social justice warrior, like many of us, then this thesis concerns you.

Thesis Summary by Chapter

Chapter 1, *Public Security Policies Predating Medidas Extraordinarias*, outlines the policies in which the extraordinary measures were founded. Introduced in 2016, 'extraordinary measures' are security policies that seek to reduce gang-related crime and violence through the training, funding, and deployment of police-military joint-task forces. Particularly, in this chapter I problematize the definition of peace, and argue that El Salvador transitioned into a 'peaceful war' post 1992.

Chapter 2, *An Ordered Disorder: State Violence and Extraordinary Measures*, I provide a detail description of the extraordinary measures as a security policy, including its relevance in public and prison security. Additionally, I narrate the outcomes and human rights abuses resulting from this policy.

In Chapter 3, *Made in the USA: Exporting Violence to the Pulgarcito de América*, turns our attention to the birth of the police and military in El Salvador and the role these (in)security institutions have served in the maintenance of a militarized nation-state. Finally, I conclude my thesis by presenting an analysis of the social construction of the Salvadoran 'Other' in the twenty-first century. I end with a remembrance of the ideals and values we ought to strive for as the people from a pueblo tan sufrido como lo es El Salvador.

CHAPTER 1
Public Security Policies Predating Medidas Extraordinarias

Manufacturing Public (In)Security through Mano Dura Policies

It is widely believed that public insecurity in El Salvador can be primarily attributed to gang-related violence. Hence, it is imperative to briefly contextualize the birth of gangs in El Salvador. In the following segment, I will provide a brief summary of years following the end of the civil war to showcase the complex social relations and policies that contributed to the creation and growth of gangs as well as gang-related violence.

By the end of the civil war, an exodus of Salvadorans had emigrated to the United States (Abrego 2014). Upon their arrival to Los Angeles, California, Salvadorans experienced ethnic discrimination, bullying (Bishop 2016), and police harassment, namely by the Los Angeles Police Department. Eventually, a group of young Salvadorans developed a "self-defense" mechanism (Mijango 2013) founded on a nationalist Salvadoran identity in the context of the Chicano gang culture. Subsequently, these self-defense groups led to the creation of the Mara Salvatrucha (MS-13), while others joined the already-established Mexican gang known as Barrio 18 (18ST). Amidst anti-immigrant sentiments sponsored by the US government, President Clinton (1993-2001), supported the implementation of US zero-tolerance anti-gang policies – which combined with the 1996 Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act (IRAIRA) – resulted in the deportation of thousands of Salvadoran immigrant gang youth (Zilberg 2007), including U.S. citizen Salvadorans. The deportation of undocumented and documented Salvadorans, some of whom had joined gangs in Los Angeles, "provoked the transnationalization of the gang phenomenon" (Mijango 2013). In other words, the United States exported gangs to El Salvador through the mass deportation of Salvadoran gang members. By

then, the Salvadoran military had successfully infiltrated its agents into the newly formed National Civilian Police, ensuring that they continued to operate with impunity. In this way, people were deported to a country dealing with the production of a peaceful war and the re-structuring of a militaristic state.

Gang-affiliated deportees were a novelty in El Salvador. Their lifestyles were appealing to many youth, especially among those whose parents were assassinated or disappeared in previous years during the civil war. In this sense, it has been argued that gangs found in post-war El Salvador "an ideal breeding ground in which, until today, continues to encourage the poorest young people to join gangs in the face of a lack of opportunities" (Martínez-Fernández 2018). Initially, deportee gang members created new social networks for social life was previously fragmented by the civil war, so they knitted their own kind of social fabric shaped by their experience in Los Angeles. Over time, however, a turf war grew between gangs, namely between the MS-13 and Barrio 18. And so, in the face of these turf wars and gang-related crime, the right-wing ARENA party implemented anti-gang laws to promote public security.

Right-wing presidencies under Francisco Flores[7] (1999-2004) and Antonio Saca (2004-2009) implemented the Mano Dura (Heavy Handed) and Super Mano Dura (Super Heavy Handed) policies in 2003 and 2004, respectively. Essentially, these policies consisted of mass incarceration, profiling, and police harassment which led to the arrest and incarceration of at least 18,000 young people from resource-poor backgrounds (Rodríguez 2013). Essentially, the purpose of these policies was to put an end to street crime and violence. Yet, since their implementation violence has rather increased. Miguel Cruz, Salvadoran urban violence

[7] During his term, Flores stole $15 million from Taiwan donations for post-earthquake relief. When the news broke out, he was put in home arrest, and then was sent to prison. Consequently, Flores' health deteriorated and is sent back to home arrest where he is affected by a stroke which caused 'irreversible' damage to his brain. He is taken to the Women's Hospital, and on January 30, 2016, dies at age 56.

researcher, maintains that "before the Mano Dura, gangs were responsible more or less seven percent of all homicides… After the Mano Dura, gangs were responsible for almost 45 percent of homicides in El Salvador" (Miguel Cruz as qtd. in Bishop 2016). That is, the Mano Dura policies had the opposite effect they wished to have: gang-related crime and violence increased, generating more public insecurity among civilians. According to ARENA politicians, Mano Dura policies were needed to respond to increasing rates of gang-related crime and violence. For others, however, Mano Dura policies were strategically implemented for electoral purposes to win votes. In other words, public security became a form of punitive populism in El Salvador. Some, like myself, would even contest that Mano Dura policies depart from punitive ideologies manufactured in the U.S. in the context of racial police profiling and were subsequently exported from the United States to El Salvador in the wake of neoliberal growth, including the growth and expansion of the prison system also known as the prison-industrial complex (Davis 2003) as well as the evolution of privatized protection (Müller 2016) within the Salvadoran context.

But anti-gang legislations and prisons were not enough to contain street violence. In response to the increasing levels of insecurity sponsored by gangs, a clandestine organization was formed in the 2000s: the Sombra Negra (Dark Shadow). The dark shadow was and still is a clandestine anti-gang extermination group comprised of former and off-duty soldiers and police agents. A nascent organization by 1994 (Amnesty International 1996), this group arose in response to the repatriation of Salvadoran American gang members (Brigida 2015); since then, this group has promoted violent social cleansing practices against gang members and those who they presume to belong to a gang. The importance of mentioning the dark shadow is that its roots can be traced back to the terror created by state apparatuses such as the police and army during the civil war. Although this is not evident in all corpses, one key feature of the black shadow is

they tie the thumbs of their victims before murdering them. This practice was a signature of the U.S. backed and U.S.-trained death squads during the repression and civil war. It is not a surprise that the old structures and agents of violence have found contemporary expressions to continue to promote terror among civilians.

The Militarization of Public Security

In 2008, the right-wing ARENA[8] party signed a decree that established the participation of members of the Fuerza Armada de El Salvador (FAES)[9] in civil security tasks (Decree No. 60. Executive Branch of the Republic of El Salvador). Surprisingly, in 2009, six months after the historic victory of the leftist Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN), the recently elected President Mauricio Funes (2009-2014) signed a decree that established the continuation of joint police-military task forces in matters of public security. Around this time, the military budget and funding increased in conjunction with more frequent reports of abuse of authority and human rights violations by the police and military. The institutional collaboration between the FAES and the Policía Nacional Civil (PNC)[10] was justified under the understanding that if "the resources and efforts of the police institution are insufficient to reduce crime [then] the Armed Force will support the national police" (Decree No. 60). Namely, the decree 168 in the Salvadoran constitution states, "at the discretion of the President, the Armed Forces could be provided exceptionally if the *ordinary* means for the maintenance of internal peace, tranquility and public safety have been exhausted" (Aguilar 2016, emphasis mine). It is under this 'loophole' in the constitution in which the FMLN assigned the army to assist the police in public security tasks.

[8] Alianza Republicana Nacionalista (Nationalist Republican Alliance).
[9] Armed Forces of El Salvador
[10] National Civilian Police

Figure 1: Mauricio Funes, President of El Salvador 2009-2014, FMLN Party

Initially, the Funes' administration established that the Salvadoran government would dispose of the FAES until December 31, 2018 (Decree No. 60. Executive Branch of the Republic of El Salvador). Until then, the FAES will support the PNC through (a) prevention of crime, deterrence and apprehension of delinquents, (b) provide perimeter security around prisons and detention centers for minors, (c) labor custody and security inside prisons, and (d) protecting the perimeter of educational centers as well as the national border. For these tasks to be implemented, the Salvadoran government created a security plan in collaboration with the General Command of the Armed Forces, the Ministry of Justice and Public Security, the Ministry of National Defense, and the National Civilian Police. While the soldiers in the joint-task forces would be under the supervision of the PNC, the leadership of the Armed Forces would help develop the policing strategy under the leadership of the president. In addition to the significant increase in military presence in civil security, the Ley de Proscripción de Maras y Pandillas[11] was passed during the Funes administration.

[11] Law of Proscription of Gangs

Figure 2: Salvador Sánchez-Cerén, President of El Salvador 2014-2019, FMLN Party

Following the second consecutive electoral victory of the FMLN in 2014, this time by former guerrilla commander Salvador Sánchez-Cerén (2014-2019), efforts to promote peace and public security were tainted by a legacy of violence, militarization, and punitive populism. In fact, the state's fight against gangs are a continuum of the type of "punitive populism"[12] that was previously used by the right-wing party. In response to high rates of violence and homicides, the Sánchez-Cerén administration created a five-year plan that focused on three important interventions with the purpose of building a better El Salvador. At the center of these projects was public security. The documents consisted of three main projects: El Plan Quinquenal de Desarrollo 2014-2019[13], the Plan El Salvador Seguro[14], and la Política Nacional de Justicia, Seguridad Pública, y Convivencia[15].

[12] In a context of coffee exploitation, the National Guard (a paramilitary group founded in 1912) was created to appease discontent in coffee fields. It was clear that the creation of these groups was linked to the protection of the economic interests of the Salvadoran oligarchy, the so-called "14 Families" - whom by the 1970s own the wealth of the entire country. Then, in 1992, then-President Alfredo Cristiani from the ARENA party deployed the FAES in coffee growing areas, a practice that was inherited by years of militarization and popular repression, only now it was done in a context of "post" civil war. However, it was until the years 2003 and 2004 when the FAES was re-introduced to public security matters in the combat against gang members. The fight against gangs was integrated into electoral campaigns, resulting in the re-direction of people's attention to gangs as the main problem of society. Therefore, the use of the FAES in public security became a form of punitive populism which followed a type of cop-for-a-vote mentality whereby heavy policing promised to bring peace. For more, read FESPAD 2017.

[13] The Five-Year Plan

[14] Plan for Safe El Salvador

[15] The National Policy of Justice, Public Safety, and Coexistence

First, the Plan Quinquenal de Desarrollo had three major purposes: to create jobs, promote education and establish public security. These goals were formulated around the concept of citizen security[16]. Then, the government created five strategies to achieve the goals of this plan. The most important components were to: (a) prevent violence, (b) strengthen the criminal investigation system to reduce the capacity of expansion and execution of criminal structures, (c) provide attention to victims of violence, (d) tighten prison control with a 'restorative justice' component, and (e) strengthen institutions. The latter primarily aimed to combat criminal structures, have a better control of weapons and ammunition, and strengthen an anti-crime coordinating mechanism in the Central American region.

Second, the Plan El Salvador Seguro supported the security strategies of la Política Nacional de Justicia, Seguridad Pública, y Convivencia. Specifically, the former was executed under the notion that, "the State is the first and great responsible for guaranteeing and protecting the life, integrity and patrimony of all citizens."[17] And lastly, the Política Nacional de Justicia, Seguridad Pública, y Convivencia promoted five goals: to (a) prevent crime and violence, (b) control and repress crime and violence, (c) promote rehabilitation and social reinsertion, (d) provide attention to victims of violence, and (e) strengthen institutions to ensure security and justice. Uniquely, the Sánchez-Cerén government proposed the use of technologies for "situational prevention in public spaces" as well as the improvement of technology and equipment for the PNC.

[16] The Salvadoran government defines Citizen Security as, "the protection of all people, life, integrity and their assets against predatory crime, through the organization of multiple social actors focused on work prevention of violence and crime with participation of citizens."
[17] Consejo Nacional de Seguridad Ciudadana y Convivencia (El Salvador). (2015). *Plan El Salvador Seguro*. Gobierno de El Salvador. p.19.

While the Salvadoran government has strengthened the police through funding and training, the Salvadoran army has also received such support. Needleless to say, it is not a surprise that the United States has been a leading force in the funding and training of Salvadoran soldiers and law enforcement as you will read in Chapter 3. Despite the role the Salvadoran elite and the United States have had in the manufacturing of violence in El Salvador, most Salvadorans would probably agree that the main source of crime, violence, and insecurity is caused by gangs. Perhaps not. Others may argue that gangs are not the source, but rather a symptom of structural violence, thus emphasizing responsibility on the highly articulated capitalist system of oppression whereby gender and race domination come to play a role in the manufacturing of gangs (i.e. toxic masculinities, racial segregation). But again, most people would insist that gangs are responsible for violence and insecurity in El Salvador, and they are not wrong. Gangs do commit acts of violence and crime such as killings, economic extortion, and threats, but the point I am trying to emphasize here is that there are larger, more sophisticated and organized systems of oppression that one must critique and continue to highlight in matters of civil (in)security. Moreover, some may argue that to reduce crime and violence one must eradicate gangs at all costs, and in fact some Salvadorans have placed trust in the militarization of public security to reduce violence generated by gangs. However, I must remind readers that the deployment of soldiers in civil security violate agreements that were established in the 1992 Peace Accords. Hence, the militarization of public security is not only a fundamental violation of peace, but a strategy to forward conditions of a peaceful war.

According to the Peace Accords, the *demilitarization* of internal security was a necessary step toward the construction of peace and democracy in El Salvador. Aguilar herself writes that in the Peace Accords it was agreed the Salvadoran military would become “an obedient,

professional and not deliberative institution… not decisive in the political field (ONU, 1993). It was established that its mission was the defense of the state's sovereignty and territorial integrity (Art. 212, Constitution)" (Aguilar 2016). As established by the Peace Accords, the newly formed National Civilian Police was assigned as gatekeepers of public security. In fact, the national police was "conceived as an independent entity from the armed forces (ONU, 1993)... It was established that public security would be the competence of civil institutions and not of the military" (Aguilar 2016). In other words, while the Peace Accords clearly outlined the roles the army and police should play in postwar El Salvador– one will be in charge of national security and the other of public security, respectively – the decree implemented in 2008 by ARENA and the subsequent security policies forwarded by the FMLN contradict the Peace Accords. That is, *demilitarization* is an important component for the promotion of peace and democracy, yet both parties have decided to *re-militarize* public security in El Salvador, thus generating the conditions for weak democracies and blurred conceptions of peace.

Thus, I highlight that the lack of transparency in matters of national and civil security as per agreed to during the Peace Accords served to institutionalize violence, thus guising it under the name of peace. In this way, a peaceful war follows a logic of warfare which is used to justify violent means to achieve peace in 'postwar' times. One would think that a postwar country in a transition to peace becomes peaceful. However, "the very notion of a *postwar* era can have the effects of deflecting attention from the existence of subtler forms of violence" (Benson et al. 2008 as qutd in Menjívar 2011), including institutionalized "chronic violence" (Pearce 2007) that the state does not articulate as war, such as police violence. Additionally, "the apparent calm or normality that can be seen in [El Salvador]" according to Martín-Baró (2000), "is part of this state of war, which requires a refusal before the collective conscience in order to continue to act

without political [or] ethical questioning" (240). In other words, the social normality experienced in the context of violence is part of 'this state of war' in which the state refuses to articulate violent social dynamics as war-like. The problem with the use of violence in a 'postwar' era is that it reaps what it seeks to end: violence at the expense of peace. In the end, one cannot fight violence with violent means. Otherwise, this violence would become a war in times of peace—hence, a peaceful war.

How did the FMLN implement security policies that contradict the agreements stated in the Peace Accords? The re-militarization of public security was made possible by a loophole in the Constitution. In fact, the Salvadoran constitution, which was re-written in 1992 as part of the Peace Accords, established that "at the discretion of the president, the Armed Forces could be disposed of exceptionally if the *ordinary* means for the maintenance of internal peace, tranquility and public insecurity have been exhausted (Art. 168, section 12, Constitution)" (Aguilar 2016, emphasis mine). At first glance, Salvadorans may believe the re-militarization of public security can promote civil security and peace. But on the closer inspection, one must keep in mind the role the military has had in the history of El Salvador. That is, the military has been used as a state apparatus to repress popular uprising and promote fear and insecurity, particularly for economic and political purposes. What I am trying to argue is that today the terrorists can be those who belong to gangs, but tomorrow the terrorists can become anyone who dares to question and resist the status quo, meaning anyone who does not necessarily belong to a gang. Hence, the militarization of public security is a matter that should concern us all in El Salvador as well as the Salvadoran diaspora.

Tracing the Militarization of Public Security Post 1992

Under the right-wing presidency of Alfredo Cristiani[18] (1989-1994), the FAES made multiple successful attempts to remain a hegemonic institution post-civil war. Particularly, the FAES prevented its structure from disarticulating. To be successful at it, they did not collaborate in the process to form the National Civilian Police, and instead infiltrated the National Civilian Police by assigning human rights violators in ranking positions in the newly-formed police (Costa 1999). Additionally, the FAES did not decrease their military personnel by 50 percent as it was agreed to in the Peace Accords, nor did the government reduce the military spending. Since then, the military repeatedly attempted to regain control of public security under the presumption that there were new threats.

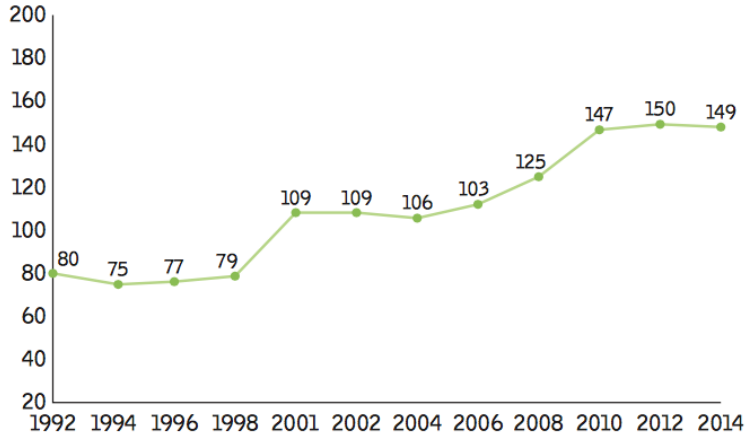
Two decades later, during the Funes government (2009-2014) and under the supervision of the Minister of Justice and Security, General David Munguía Payes, the FMLN gave the FAES the green light to re-gain control of civil security. To take a case in point, the first increase in the army's annual budget occurred in 2001 under the right-wing AREA governance. While in 1998 the budget consisted of $79 million, by 2001 it had significantly increased to $109 million. The second increase occurred between 2002 and 2008, a period ruled by the ARENA party. In this period, the annual budget designated to national defense went from $106 million to $125 million (Aguilar 2016). The third significant increase in military budget occurred in 2010 during the leftist FMLN administration. While in 2008 the military budget consisted of $125 million, by

[18] By 1989, a group of businessmen owed 705 million US dollars (then 3 thousand 525 million colones) to banks owned by the State, which was equivalent to 70 percent of everything the banks had lent. During Cristiani's presidency, these businessmen were pardoned, the banks were privatized, and some were bought by the same businessmen who had broken them. In 2005-2008 (during the right-wing Antonio Saca presidency) banks were sold to foreign companies. In sum, during Cristiani's presidential term, $1,490.1 million dollars were lost to state fraud ($9 million), burial of medicines ($17.1 million), sale of electricity to U.S. company ($759 million), and the sanitation and privatization of banks ($705 million). For more, read "Álbum: Corrupción de ARENA" by Equipo Maíz (2014).

2010 the budget increased to $147 million. In the consecutive years, 2012 and 2014, the budget increased to $150 million and remained constant with $149 million (Aguilar 2016). In sum, the military budget has been progressively increasing since the years under a right-wing administration, but the highest budget peaked during the FMLN ruling under former president Funes.

Moreover, under the Funes administration, I stress that the FAES was deployed for internal security matters. That is, to protect Salvadorans from the threat of gangs and promote security. In fact, the deployment of the FAES in public security required a military spending greater than its budget. Specifically, the military spending consisted of $228 million in 2009, but peaked in 2013 with $269 million. By 2013, the military spending was $257 million, despite a deficit in the state's finances. Not surprisingly, the reports of human rights abuses committed by the armed forces increased by 537% between 2009 and 2011 (Aguilar 2016).

Table 2: US-funded military budget to the Armed Forces of El Salvador, 1992-2014 (in millions of US$)



Source: Córdoba for years 1992-1998, and Ministry of Finance for years 2001-2014, as cited in Aguilar (2016)

Importing Technologies of Terror

"Todos aquellos miembros de la policía que por motivos de su trabajo tengan que emplear armas de fuego contra un delincuente, que lo hagan con toda la confianza. Hay una institución que los respalda. Hay un gobierno que nos apoya."
-Mauricio Ramírez Landaverde[19]

Historically, El Salvador's strategies on civilian security have been coordinated alongside the United States. The organization and implementation of security policies in El Salvador are a transnational effort whereby the United States has had a strong influence in El Salvador's anti-gang legislatures. In an attempt to learn more about the militarization and repressive policing in El Salvador, I interviewed Laura Embree-Lowry, former Program Director for the Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador (CISPES).[20] Laura asserted that public security in El Salvador is transnationally collaborated between these two countries:

> When the Obama administration first took office, one of the policy pieces they put out towards El Salvador was the creation of this Partnership for Growth. It did not involve any funding assistance. Solely, it was a partnership by which the U.S. was going to help El Salvador approve policies that would allow its economy to grow. So, it didn't really have a security component to its mission. But when the first reports came out from the task force that was created, which included economic experts and government officials from the United States as well as from El Salvador, their first reports were almost entirely about security. Basically, they determined that security was one of the biggest challenges for economic growth in El Salvador and used that to say, "therefore these new security measures need to be taken and we need all this increase cooperation between the U.S. and Salvadoran police.

In this excerpt, Laura has mentioned two important factors that must not be ignored when discussing public security policies in El Salvador. First, she sheds light to the role that the Partnership for Growth has had in El Salvador. While the Partnership for Growth seeks to help

[19] Former Director of PNC and Minister of Justice and Security
[20] CISPES is a transnational solidarity organization founded in the 1980s by Salvadoran refugees and North American activists.

improve the economy of El Salvador, the initial report suggested that violence was a major challenge for economic growth in El Salvador. Thus, the report became a document on civil security, and not on the Salvadoran economy per se. Secondly, the US government suggested that a certain type of *new security measures need to be taken and we need all this increase cooperation between the U.S. and Salvadoran police*. In other words, the report for the Partnership for Growth established the ground rules El Salvador must follow to receive economic aid from the United States: to implement US-sponsored security policies, including the collateral collaboration between the US's and El Salvador's police. By providing this example, I insist that the report from the Partnership for Growth was a way to influence El Salvador's legislature on civil security. Laura also highlighted how U.S.-sponsored, zero-tolerance and anti-gang models become transnationalized through US partnerships with El Salvador,

> And they [US and Salvadoran officials] talked about the need to 'improve their technical investigator capacity by using more modern techniques for investigation.' You also see a lot of collaboration and sharing of strategies between the US and Salvadoran police forces. One of the main elements for the Partnership for Growth was moving toward a computerized system to monitor crime in El Salvador. And it was a system that is in place in the Chicago Police Department…. It goes into the 'broken window' theory of policing where what they are doing is they are cracking down on extremely minor crimes and they are increasing the criminalization of communities rather than actually showing results that it prevents bigger crimes.

The Chicago's computerized system of violence prevention is not the only policing model that has been imported into El Salvador. As previously demonstrated, in 2003 and 2004 the Plan Mano Dura and Super Mano Dura policies were passed as a model for public security. With the passing of these policies, the Salvadoran army directly participated in anti-gang civil security operations for the first time post-peace accords. These repressive zero-tolerance and anti-gang operations were inspired by Mayor of New York, Rudi Giuliani (1994-2001). Not surprisingly, these policies suggested that minors who commit crimes should be treated like

adults. As an illustration, John Huvane, then-president of Giuliani Security and Safety and former NYC police officer said, "if a child of 14 commits a crime, they should be treated as an assassin" (Grandin 2015). Giuliani's criminalization and dehumanization toward young men *and* boys not only influenced public security policies domestically, but set the tone for repressive policing and militarization in El Salvador in the years to come.

The Violent Paradox of the Politics of Peace

According to the United Nations' (1993) El Salvador Truth Commission, there were 22,000 reports of human rights abuses committed during the Salvadoran civil war of which around 85 percent were attributed to victims of state agents, namely military, paramilitary groups, and the US-funded death squads[21]. Human rights abuses have often been accompanied by institutional impunity that favors state agents and state violence. According to Jeannette Aguilar, Director of the University Public Opinion Institute (IUDOP), "five days after the publication of the [UN's] Truth Commission report... the [Salvadoran] assembly approved the Amnesty Law to guarantee the impunity of all those involved in serious cases of human rights violations committed before January 1, 1992" (Aguilar 2016). Even though the majority of the human rights abuses attributed the violence to the state agents, the police and army were not held accountable and instead were given a green light to continue to use violence as tactic for social order. In addition to institutional impunity, the Salvadoran government has refused to release the names of state agents who were trained in the US and who were accused of human rights violations. Despite the efforts to de-militarize El Salvador and seek justice from impunity, we

[21] Roberto D'Aubuisson, School of the Americas (SOA) graduate, co-founded the dead squads, and responsible for the 1980 execution of Monsignor Oscar Romero. In 1981, he founded the right-wing ARENA party and became its first leader. After transnational activist and political mobilization, the SOA changed its name to the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Operation (WHINSEC). WHINSEC continues to train soldiers worldwide in counterinsurgency tactics which include torture, disappearances, and assassinations.

only know the names of a *few* SOA graduates responsible for the massacres committed against working-class Salvadorans. In this way, distinguished organizations such as the School of the Americas Watch (SOAW) and the Mauricio Aquino Foundation are still fighting for justice.

Despite this haunting legacy of a repressive Salvadoran military *and* the antagonistic history between the military and revolutionary leftist groups, the FMLN government has relied on joint police-military task forces to ensure public security, and paradoxically, promote the peace us Salvadorans have been yearning for. That the FMLN has the FAES in public security is a contradiction. It is precisely this paradox that speaks to the larger capitalistic and imperialist policies the United States has exerted over El Salvador; and it is precisely here where lies a point of departure to do the work of auto-crítica among the Salvadoran left.

CHAPTER 2
An Ordered Disorder: State Violence, Extraordinary Measures and the Politics of 'Social Cleansing'

Extraordinary Measures

In 2016, the Sánchez-Cerén government implemented the controversial Extraordinary Measures in three areas: public security, prisons, and legislation. The main goal of these measures was to secure prisons, protecting citizens from the violence and crime that is being orchestrated from inside prisons. A secondary priority was to promote civilian security via the deployment of state agents and tanks equipped with large caliber weapons (FESPAD 2017). In fact, "the use of the army in public security matters is not new in El Salvador, since it has been taking place since the establishment of Joint Task Groups in the early 1990s" (FESPAD 2017). While the FMLN has re-militarized the streets of El Salvador, it is important to note that this is not the first time joint task groups are deployed in the name of public security. Unfortunately, the medidas extraordinarias, according to FESPAD[22], present "a serious step backwards to the fulfillment of the Peace Accords." To reiterate, the peace accords established that only the national civilian police will be the designated entity in charge of promoting public security, not the army. Yet, this enigma and surprise of the militarization of social life in times of 'peace' was validated by a Salvadoran environmental activist who expressed to me, "we were surprised to see military tanks in 2016-2017 around plazas" (Mirna 2018, personal communication).

Furthermore, the main goal of these measures is to make prison management more efficient, and thus protect citizens from the violence and crime that is orchestrated from inside prisons. Particularly, it is believed that incarcerated gang members 'call the shots' from inside

[22]Fundación de Estudios para la Aplicación del Derecho

prisons, therefore tighter prison management and security was thought to bring a reduction of crime and violence outside prisons. While some have supported the medidas extraordinarias, others have argued that the means to achieve public security violate the human rights of prisoners and citizens (SPASS 2016, FESPAD 2018).

In prisons, these measures mainly consisted of isolating incarcerated persons through the transferring of inmates between prisons, suspending transfers of inmates, restricting family visits, isolating inmates through confinement or by placing them in "special cells." Additionally, soon after the measures were implemented, court dates were suspended for a month and the telecommunication traffic around the perimeter of prisons was cut. Beside tighter prison security, the extraordinary measures included the deployment of joint military-police task forces on the streets. The main goal of these joint-task forces was to locate, arrest, and incarcerate gang members. Hence, in addition to the police agents who were already responsible for overseeing the streets of El Salvador (Escalante Saracais 2016), 1,600 soldiers from the Armed Forces and 1,000 National Police officers were deployed nationwide. Initially, three joint police-military groups were formed to promote civil security, but over time the government created various task forces, including the Fuerzas Especializadas de Reacción[23] (FES)[24], Fuerzas de Intervención y Recuperación de Territorios[25] (FIRT)[26], Fuerzas de Tarea "Centro Histórico"[27] (Escalante

[23] The FES gave birth to an extermination group. For more read, "La policía maquilla sus unidades élite involucradas en delitos" by Bryan Avelar (2018); "En la intimidad del escuadrón de la muerte de la policía" by Bryan Avelar and Juan Martínez d'Aubuisson; "Policía detiene a los agentes del grupo de exterminio revelado por Factum" by Fernando Romero (2017).
[24] Special Reaction Forces
[25] The FIRT is particularly prone to committing extrajudicial executions. For more see, "Official Data Suggests El Salvador Police Kill With Impunity" by Roberto Valencia (2015).
[26] Intervention and Territorial Recovery Forces
[27] Task Forces "Centro Histórico"

Saracais 2016), as well as the Grupos Conjuntos de Apoyo a la Comunidad[28] which were all comprised of the PNC and FAES (SPASS 2017).

While the Sánchez-Cerén government implemented the extraordinary measures, it is important to highlight that these measures were a collective effort between the left- and right-wing groups. Particularly, the actors behind these new security legislations and legislative reforms included the right-wing ARENA party as well as centrist-right parties like the Great Alliance for National Unity (GANA) and the Christian Democratic Party (PDC). Additionally, the Salvadoran Government (GOES), Legislative Assembly, General Prosecutor of the Republic (FGR), and the Ministry of Justice and Public Security (MJSP). Ultimately, the purpose of these security measures was to facilitate prison sentence and better control inside prisons. However, the legislature included public security as part of these security measures, which was precisely how the joint task forces were formed. Lastly, it is of great importance to state that out of three security laws that were reformed by politicians, only one law addressed police conduct[29]. The fact that there was a greater emphasis on securitizing the streets of El Salvador over police conduct set the stage for the human right violations against civilians that I will present next.

Outcomes and Human Rights Abuses by the FAES and PNC: A Look Inside Prisons

Incarcerated inmates were negatively impacted by these policies. Historically, inmates in Salvadoran prisons have been denied of health, security, a fair trial, and programs of re-adaptation; but these conditions of precariousness worsened with the implementation of the extraordinary measures. As an illustration, in 2016 there were 2,039 reports of human rights violations inside prisons, including the lack of medical and mental assistance. According to the then-General Director of Penal Centers, Rodil Fernando Hernández Somoza, inmates were given

[28] Joint Community Support Groups
[29] Police Disciplinary Law

medical and psychiatric attention during the implementation of the extraordinary measures. However, the on-site observations conducted by the PDDH contrast his statements. In fact, some incarcerated individuals who suffer from medical and psychological irregularities (i.e. "pulmonary tuberculosis," "nervous colitis," "anxiety," "aggressiveness," "neurotic symptoms," "psychosomatic diseases") were not given any medical attention due to shortage in medical and psychological personnel. Similarly, when inmates or children of inmates—as in the case inside women's prisons—were given gynecological or pediatric assistance, inmates reported poor quality of health care as well as a shortage of medicine.

Additionally, in the same year relatives of inmates submitted 675 reports regarding the lack of medical and psychological assistance inside prisons. These reports coincided with an investigation conducted by the PDDH. According Hernández Somoza, in 2016 there were 518 reported cases of tuberculosis in prisons where extraordinary measures were implemented, corresponding to a rise of 400% of reported cases of tuberculosis (PDDH 2017). Comparatively, there were only 328 reported cases of tuberculosis in prisons where extraordinary measures *were not* implemented. In other words, the prison conditions where the extraordinary measures were implemented were worsened so much so that the prison population suffered a rise in 400% of tuberculosis cases. The PDDH considers the rise of tuberculosis in these prisons as a "serious health crisis" given the conditions of vulnerability that inmates live in. They added, "it is perhaps the most serious consequence that extraordinary measures leave inside prisons, and that urgent attention is needed to avoid further damage to the health of the prison population and of the Salvadoran population in general if it is not treated beforehand to avoid epidemics." That is, the extraordinary measures made the health conditions more precarious inside prisons, which can have a spill-over effect over the general Salvadoran society.

Moreover, relatives of inmates reported inhabitable prison conditions (No. of reports: 458), transfer of inmates to other prisons (No. of reports: 297), personal care kits that were dropped off by them and were never given to inmates (No. of reports: 97), lack of explanation for solitary confinement (No. of reports: 21), malnourishment (No. of reports: 20), among others. The PDDH's reports on the extraordinary measures were corroborated in an interview I had with Verónica Reyna, staff at a human rights organization called the Passionist Social Service. She expressed:

> For us, the measures in penal centers is an effort on the part of the government against gang leaders where they are tortured without touching: 'I'm not going to hit you, I'm not going to kill you directly; I'm going to isolate you, and I'm going to let you die because I'm not going to give you medical attention by keeping conditions of contagion... And since nobody watches over me, it does not matter.' No one has the capacity to enter prisons. For me it is like a punishment strategy. And it is a demonstration of (the state's) strength against the gangs.

According to Verónica Reyna, unhealthy and contagious prison conditions become an additional punishment against the incarcerated. That is, keeping prisons in unlivable conditions (by prison standards) becomes the state's punishment and solution to violence whereby conditions of maiming, debility, and wounding are utilized as security strategies. Consequently, the state's neglect toward the incarcerated dehumanize gangs with the hope that it will (somehow) debilitate them enough to the point of incapacitation or death, hence reducing their potential to perpetuate violence ever again. Under this logic, the reduction of violence is attributed to the crippling or death of gang members. To understand how the practice of debility functions as the state's apparatus of violence, it is useful to engage with the concept of maiming. Jasbir Puar (2017) forwards that maiming "functions not as an incomplete death or an accidental assault on life, but as the end goal [is] the dual production of permanent disability… and the attrition of the life support systems that might allow populations to heal from this harm" (143).

By drawing on the Israeli settler colonial invasion in Palestine, Puar uses maiming as a biopolitical practice to complicate the distinctions between living and dying. As an illustration, the author argues that Israeli soldiers employ a maiming technology in which they wound Palestinians to neither completely kill them, nor completely keep them alive. This practice is known as the 'shoot-to-cripple' protocol. In the context of Salvadoran prisons where extraordinary measures were implemented, the physiological and psychological debilitation of incarcerated gang members is both a punishment and a crippling strategy. Unfortunately, the practice of maiming inside prisons impacts incarcerated gang members as well as inmates who have yet to be given a prison sentence which means that they are *innocent* under the Constitution. In other words, even people who do not commit crimes but who are wrongfully accused and incarcerated become victims of the state's neglect in the prison system.

Another problem with the extraordinary measures is that it has failed to fulfill its purpose. While the purpose of these measures was to ensure security inside prisons, a report by the PDDH proves otherwise. According to the PDDH (2017), prison staff has been unable to provide proper protection for "at-risk inmates." To elaborate, there were 47 inmates who died in 2016. Out of these, 24 were waiting for a court sentence which under the Salvadoran penal code it means that they were innocent at the time of their death. Moreover, out of these 47 deaths, 19 died out of natural cause/sickness which means that their deaths were preventable. Additionally, 16 of the 47 were murdered, and 12 were not given a cause of death (PDDH 2017). Since these deaths happened during the guardianship of the state, the PDDH places accountability for their deaths on the General Directorate of Penal Centers as well as the penitentiary and criminal justice systems. As a matter of fact, the PDDH report states, "it should be taken into account that one of the objectives of the implementation of the extraordinary measures in the prisons was precisely

that the administration recovered or took control of the interior of the prisons. In this sense, the [fact that the] number of deaths that occurred in prisons [has] not decreased is unacceptable." To this day, the Salvadoran state has yet to accept that its approach to keeping inmates in unlivable conditions is both a punishment and an expression of violence.

Outcomes and Human Rights Abuses by the FAES and the PNC: A Look Inside Bartolinas

Since the implementation of the Mano Dura and Super Mano Dura, bartolinas (detention centers at police stations) have been turned into extensions of prisons. It is estimated that over 5,000 people are incarcerated in bartolinas, surpassing a 300 percent capacity (Avelar 2017). Each cell inside bartolinas is four meters long and four meters wide. However, cells are overcrowded with 60 people, as opposed to its capacity of 10. While the maximum time someone can be detained in the bartolinas is three days, detainees spend months and even years in these police detention stations (Avelar 2017). Since bartolinas are an extension of prisons, it is predictable that the same logic of extreme punishment and maiming apply to these detention centers. In a bartolina located in the city of Zacamil, the PNC does not have the resources to feed the 207 men and 32 women who have been deprived of their liberty. Every day for three times a day a line is formed outside its gate. Daily, female relatives come here to drop off food for the inmates, while others who cannot commit to this daily hassle choose to purchase meals and personal kits in advance. Cocar López, an informal businessman, oversees this business. Particularly, he is in charge of selling and delivering the food and kits to the inmates. Every month, Cocar makes $4,908 just from selling the kits. His monthly earnings from selling the food was not disclosed in the report, but one can assume that an additional couple thousand dollars are added to his wallet from selling food. The problem is that relatives claim that the food and kits are not always delivered to the detainees. Another problem is that the police confiscate

everything the detainees have shortly after the kits have been delivered, leaving detainees with nothing. The confiscation of food and personal kits are harmful to the men and women who are already restricted access from food and personal hygiene inside these bartolinas, which is how malnutrition and illnesses become a part of the bartolina experience. To return to the previous argument on maiming, the restricted access to food, potable water, personal kits and health care inside these bartolinas are an additional punishment to detainees which can cause physical and psychological debilitation among detainees. Resulting from these conditions of precarity, detainees in the Zacamil and Cuscatancingo bartolinas were reported to have been infected with Sarna—a highly contagious sickness that causes itching, rashes and blisters and appear between finger, genitals, and other parts of the body. As a matter of fact, according to a chief of police some detainees in these bartolinas "cannot even sit due to the fungus they have in the anus" (Avelar 2017).

Outcomes and Human Rights Abuses by the FAES and the PNC: State Agents Target Civilians

The government created various U.S.-funded and U.S.-trained joint police-military task forces, one of which was named Fuerzas Especializadas de Reacción[30]. Shortly after, the FES gained notoriety for becoming an anti-gang extermination group.[31] As a matter of fact, these joint police-military task forces - including the FES, the GRP and the Armed Forces - have been accused of committing forced disappearances[32], extrajudicial killings[33], massacres and psychological terror in times of 'peace.'[34] In this way, the militarization of public security has

[30] Special Reaction Forces
[31] For more read, "La Policía maquilla sus unidades élite involucradas en delitos" by Bryan Avelar.
[32] "La Fuerza Armada desapareció a tres jóvenes en tiempos de paz" by María Cidón Kiernan
[33] "En la intimidad del escuadron de la muerte de la policía" by Bryan Avelar & Martínez d'Aubuisson
[34] "La Policía masacró en la finca San Blas" by Roberto Valencia, Oscar Martínez, and Daniel Caravantes

violated the human rights of citizens. Such a violence in times of peace is predominantly directed from men to men. For example, the Salvadoran police has had a ratio of one (male) officer killed for every 53 (male) gang members slain (Valencia 2016). This is to say that most victims at the hands of state agents and teenage boys and men.

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2014

In 2014, two years before the medidas extraordinarias were implemented, the Fiscalía General de la República (FGR)[35] and Procuraduría para la Defensa de los Derechos Humanos (PDDH)[36] received a report of three forced disappearances. Although these disappearances did not occur as a consequence of the extraordinary measures, they did occur a couple of years after the military was re-assigned in the task of civil security. Hence, what I am trying to emphasize in the following sections is that the militarization of public security generates insecurity, uncertainty, and is dangerous for the collective wellbeing of Salvadoran society.

On February 18 around 8:45 a.m., six agents of the FAES frisked six young men who were hanging out by the steps of a house. When the agents frisked the young men, one said he lived in the house right across where the frisk was taking place, so he was told to go away. The other five were arrested and instructed to walk along the train rail. As these young men walked

[35] General Prosecutor of the Republic
[36] Office of the Ombudsman for Human Rights

along the trail, the agents beat and verbally abused them. At some point, the agents stop and let two of them go. These two young men did not walk far, and later returned to where they had been let go which was the place where they last saw their friends. However, by the time they returned, there were no traces of Francisco, Óscar or José, their friends who were last seen in the hands of agents of the armed forces. On the same day, Francisco's mother went to the police station to inquire about his son. She spoke to Sergeant Coreto who oversaw the frisk. Sergeant Coreto responded to the mother that "They will come back," and instead of worrying about his son's whereabouts that she should go back to her house to "do the house chores." To this day, these three young men have yet to be found.

This incident raises questions about potential clandestine graves as well as human and organ trafficking present in the Central American region, but this is out of the scope of my thesis. But the point I am trying to make with the previous illustration is that forced disappearances are a strategy of state violence. In this way, the forced disappearance of these young men (men who could have been my relatives or friends) complicate our understanding of peace, and support my argument that state violence is an expression of a peaceful war. One clear example is the disproportionate killing of gang members with the use of weapons. In 2014, the PNC reported 256 "confrontations" with presumed gang members. These armed confrontations resulted in 83 deaths of men who were presumed to be in a gang (Silva Ávalos 2017) while there was not a single fallen officer. These statistics show that gang members are being disproportionately targeted and killed during confrontations with the police and military. Another important point to highlight from this example is that what the police report as 'confrontations' are often used as an excuse to fire at unarmed gang members, as you will read in the following sections. Often, the

police place guns near the assassinated bodies of their victims to make it seem as if gangs started the confrontation, thus justifying their assassinations in the eyes of the public.

2015-2016

In 2015, seven cases of torture were reported to the Servicio Social Pasionista (SPASS)[37]. According to Verónica Reyna, Subdirector for the Human Rights Observatory by SPASS, these tortures consisted of beatings and had characteristics "similar to those that occurred in the 80s during the armed conflict: electric shocks, immersion of the head in water, play with the trigger of the gun pointing at the head... tying people by their feet inside bartolinas [police detention centers], electric shocks... in genitals" (Kiernan 2017). According to a police officer who was interviewed by journalist for the Faro online newspaper, it is evident that "the hatred for gang members within the police and the desire for revenge has increased" and admitted to "hear conversations between agents who say: these sons of bitches, they should all be killed" (Valencia 2016).

In 2016 when these measures were implemented, the number of homicides in the nation resulted in 4,881, a reduction of homicides in comparison to 2015 when the number of homicides resulted in 6,071: that is, a reduction of 1,190 homicides in one year (PDDH 2017). Something that caught my attention during the research was that in 2016 the number of homicides of people related to gangs was 1,700 in comparison to 66 homicides of state agents (PDDH 2017). These statistics show that even though there was a reduction of homicides in the year when the measures were implemented, the deaths of gang members during 'confrontations' with the police was disproportionately higher than the deaths of police officers. Not surprisingly, these

[37] Passionist Social Service

disproportions have only increased. By comparing 2015 and 2016, "it appears that the PNC is becoming increasingly lethal over time" (Valencia 2016). For example, in 2015, the PNC reported 676 confrontations with gang members. Out of these so-called confrontations, 359 presumed gang members were killed at the hands of the FAES and PNC (Silva Ávalos 2017). Additionally, in 20 months between January 2015 and October 2016, the PNC recorded 1,074 armed confrontations between the FAES/PNC and gang members. Out of these confrontations, the FAES and PNC injured 255 and killed 693 presumed gang members. By looking at these numbers, it is safe to infer many of those who were injured and killed included children/minors. Another realistic assumption is that all of those who were injured and assassinated by the PNC/FAES were men/boys (Valencia 2016). In other words, the violent assassinations committed by agents of the state are gendered because it primarily targets boys and men. In a later chapter, you will read how agents of the state violate the rights of girls and women – namely using sexual violence.

In response to the 'confrontations' that have been reported by the PNC, the PNC Director Howard Cotto[38] argues that "those confrontations occur when delinquents respond with gunfire to the officers' attempts to arrest them… and so they die" (Valencia 2016). However, agents of the state shoot and riddle (presumed) gang members *first* whether these boys/men carry guns with them or not. Cotto's assertion that the agents have the right to 'self-defense' in the face of threat contributes to a rhetoric that produces national impunity whereby state agents do not get convicted. In this form, state violence is produced in multiple ways. First, state agents are given the 'green light' to kill, and secondly, public officials promote institutional impunity whereby the relatives of those assassinated by state agents do not receive the justice they deserve. The

[38] Trained in the U.S., Chile and Spain.

disproportionate deaths of (presumed) gang members compared to the state agents killed during 'confrontations' paradoxically speaks highly about how state violence can be used to justify the reduction of another form of violence. I insist that a nation-state that used violence in the context of a peaceful democracy is not really a nation-state at peace. Thus, Salvadorans who live in a society that has declared a 'war against gangs' are faced to engage with the contradictions that arise in the military logic of a peaceful war.

To continue to illustrate my point, the following examples showcase additional examples of when the PNC and FAES violated the rights of citizens. According to a report by the SPASS, on March 26, 2015, the National Civilian Police (PNC) reported an armed 'confrontation' with alleged gang members. The confrontation resulted in the death of 8 people of ages: 16, 17, 20, 27, 29, 34, 34 and 40. Consequently, one of the witnesses was killed 19 days after the massacre, while Consuelo, mother and witness of the massacre, received death threats presumably from the Grupo de Reacción[39]—a branch of the FAES. This event came to be known as the San Blas Massacre, whereby according to El Faro journalists words like "massacre," "mounting," and "summary executions" best describe the event.

While I do not seek to romanticize violence nor re-victimize or objectify the men and the woman who were assassinated on this day, the purpose of this illustration is to showcase the highly militaristic tactics used to kill them. Thus, the following description shows that the definitions of violence and peace are blurred through the militaristic rhetoric of civil security. Returning to the example of the San Blas Massacre, journalists documented the events that unfolded during the massacre (Valencia, Martínez & Valencia Caravantes, 2015). The massacre, which resulted in the death of two non-gang members and six gang members, started around 12

[39] Reaction Group

midnight in the cantón (village) Matazano 2. It is important to highlight that those who were killed were not necessarily gang members. The fact that state agents can kill anyone whether they are in a gang or not should raise great concerns among civilians. One of the two non-gang members who were assassinated on this morning included Sonia Guerrero (16-year-old). Sonia is an example of how state violence has gendered expressions. To make it clear, a state agent placed a gun in Sonia's mouth (as to potentially represent his penis) before pulling the trigger and killing her. The second non-gang member who was assassinated by state agents was Dennis (20-years-old). Dennis was a young man and active church member who had nothing to do with the gang members and Sonia. Yet, the agents did not care who it was they were after, so they shot Denise in the right arm and in the head. It is important to highlight that prior to killing Dennis, they had arrived at the house where his family lived.

Dennis and his uncle, Jesús Hernández. For several years, Dennis Alexander Martinez was a servant in the branch of the Baptist Biblical Tabernacle of the canton El Matazano 2, in San José Villanueva. This image was taken a few weeks before his death. Photo from Facebook Dennis Hernández. *Source:* Roberto Valencia,

While the agents threatened and even physically abused his family, Dennis was killed fifteen meters away from where his mom and three younger siblings were being questioned. So I ask, how is state's indiscriminate violence against gang members and civilians creating a more peaceful society for the younger generation, as in the case of Dennis' younger siblings who witnesses the massacre?

Furthermore, in the following I will describe the deaths of the gang members who were assassinated on this morning. Ernesto (17-years-old) and José Antonio (27-years-old) were each

shot at least twenty times. Ernesto received most of the shots in the face, thus destroying his face, while José Antonio received shots in his head, chest, and abdomen. Manuel (29-years-old) received thirteen shots, of which two were targeted at his head. Hugo (34-years-old) was shot nine times, and received an additional shot in the head. Mauricio (40-years-old) received four or five shots in his head and neck. Lastly, José Alfredo (34-years-old) was shot twice in the head, and received multiple shots in his chest and abdomen. The purpose of this description is not to re-victimize these men, but to shed light to the highly militarized and war-like method in which they were killed: by shooting them on their heads and chest. It is important to emphasize where the bullets hit because it is proof that the police have received military training, and no public official who is supposed to protect and serve citizens should undergone such training.

In the same year, on August 15th, the FAES and PNC reported an armed 'confrontation' with alleged gang members. This confrontation resulted in the death of five presumed gang members. The youngest was 15 years old, while the oldest victim was 25. According to witnesses, the victims had already surrendered when they were shot by agents of the FAES and Grupo de Operaciones Policiales Especiales[40]. Four days after the massacre, Camila, who was a witness of the bloody event, was disappeared by state agents. In this way, not only did state agents used extra-summary killings as a method to promote peace, but they also forcibly disappeared a witness. Lastly, on February 8, 2016, the Reaction Group killed four people during an armed 'confrontation.' The youngest victim was 13 years old, followed by a 16-, 17-, and a 23-year-old. One of the victims was not a member of a gang, proving the point that agents of the state kill indiscriminately and with impunity.

[40] Group of Special Police Operations

The abuse of authority by the FAES and PNC, both outside and inside of prisons, is not always reported. So when reports are made, it is imperative to take a serious look at them. In 2016, the PDDH investigated 556 denunciations against the National Police and Armed Forces. These denunciations included illegal detentions (113), poor treatment (317), intimidation (76), executions (27), threats (18), and torture (8). In fact, poor treatment, illegal detentions, intimidation and threats increased after April, when the extraordinary measures were implemented. Hence, the PDDH concludes that these measures "negatively impacted the human rights sphere of the people since the number of reports incremented during their implementation." Moreover, the examples I presented above showcase that the extraordinary measures created the conditions in which massacres are once again acceptable in Salvadoran society in what it is supposed to be a postwar period. For this reason, I believe that the violence we see now in El Salvador – this so-called 'war against gangs' – is a war against civilians and should be contextualized in the era of a peaceful war.

2017

According to a journalist report by Beltrán Luna, on March 24, 2017, four police officers from the Sección Táctica Operativa (STO)[41] shot and killed José Mauricio Salazar in El Zaite. José was a disabled, working-class man. Neighbors in the El Zaite trusted José because despite being deaf and mute, he was a hard worker, reliable, and reputable handyman in his community. Earlier on the day of his murder, it came to the police's attention that a group of armed men were gathered in El Zaite. The police's version, which has become the official story, stresses that when police arrived and tried to arrest them (the armed men), the men opened fired causing the

[41] Tactical Operation Section

Portrait of José Salazar. Photo by: FACTUM/Jorge Beltrán

police to fire back at them in an attempt to "protect" themselves. But this version is far from the truth. The police did arrive at El Zaite when they spotted José who had just gotten off his work shift. According to witnesses, in a matter of minutes the police shot him in the face, killing José on the spot. José was an innocent man who should not have died at the hands of the police; and the police men who killed him know this, therefore they altered the crime scene and tampered evidence. When the police filed a report, they claimed to have found a 9mm Glock and bullet shells next to José's dead body. However, there were several witnesses who claimed that José was carrying a drill - his work tool - not a gun. The witnesses also never heard the police make an arrest—implying that the agents never attempted to make an arrest, and instead just opened fire. Additionally, Salazar's work tool was mysteriously disappeared. Only one of the four police officers accused of his death was convicted (Cidón Kiernan 2018). The other three continue to operate with impunity.

José's murder has not been the only case when police officers manipulate crime scenes. In fact, months before José's death, on January 10, 2017, Daniel Alemán was unjustly arrested by the police and was accused of being in possession of illegal drugs. Months later, it was proven the police had lied and planted the drugs. Such illegal practices within the police was affirmed by a police officer who chose to remain anonymous in an interview with local journalists. Regarding the police's illegal practices, he expressed, "and who does not have drugs or weapons in their closets? You know what they are used for. They are used to get out of trouble" (Beltrán Luna 2017). Agents also manipulated the crime scene the morning of the San Blas Massacre

when Dennis' bible mysteriously disappeared from his room[42], making it appear as if he was a gang member, and not a religious young man who happened to be in the wrong place at the wrong time at the time of the massacre. Around the time of these killings, on May 5, 2017 Jaime Martínez, Director for the Academia Nacional de Seguridad Pública (ANSP)[43], encouraged agents of the Tactical Operation Section to shoot without thinking about the press or human rights. To put it in his words, "Que no les tiemble la mano" ("don't get shaky hands") when pulling the trigger. His permission to shoot indiscriminately served as moral and institutional support to state agents, and gave them a 'green light' to continue to kill indiscriminately. These examples lead me to the heart of my thesis, the questions, how is military and police violence supposed to promote security and peace? And how does the nation-state define security, peace, and the 'war against gangs'? As I have previously contested, state agents kill, disappear and torture anyone who they wish to kill, disappear and torture under the pretext of civilian security.

Despite proof the police has planted evidence and killed innocent people, they continue to operate with impunity. On February 14, 2017, with the help of a civilian police informant, four agents of the FES committed the extrajudicial killing of 29-year-old Ivan Benjamín Carcamo Caballero known as "Bam Bam," a member of the 18 ST gang. After the informant realized he put himself in a position where he could either be killed by gangs or the police, he turned himself in and claimed he had helped the FAES locate gang members and manipulate crime scenes on multiple occasions (Avelar & Martínez d'Aubuisson 2017). After turning himself in, this informant collaborated with journalists to infiltrate the PNC. During a three-month infiltration via the messaging application WhatsApp, tracker exposed illegal crimes committed by the PNC which included sexual abuse, extrajudicial killings, extortions, and the illegal buying, selling and

[42] For more read, "La Policía masacró en la finca San Blas" by Valencia, Martínez and Valencia Caravantes (2015).
[43] National Academy of Public Security

trade of weapons (Avelar & d'Aubuisson 2017). Tracker was successful at obtaining such evidence because WhatsApp was the police's avenue for communicating and organizing a clandestine 'system of informal intelligence.' As an illustration, on one occasion the police beat up a gang member and proceeded to kill him. After the killing, the policemen mounted evidence but officers on site realized there were visible irregularities in the crime scene. In response to these irregularities, an officer sends messages to the rest of the group to remind them to be smart about mounting crime scenes. The office stresses, "mates we must be careful with the photos we have to be smart about mounting scenes so that problems do not arise later" (Avelar & d'Aubuisson 2017).

The agents responsible for Ivan's aka Bam Bam's death were detained a day after tracker's testimony was published by Factum. Despite the evidence gathered through Factum, the informant, medical-forensic reports and experts consulted by Factum, the agents were let free with no charges three days after their detention (Factum 2017). The release of these agents after having committed serious crimes is not an isolated case. According to Agnes Callamard, United Nations Special Rapporteur for Extrajudicial, Summary or Arbitrary Executions, "in 2017, 92.96% of all allegations of police/army killings were dismissed" (United Nations 2018), thus highlighting that impunity for state agents is an institutional problem that runs deep in El Salvador.

Militarization, systematic killings, and impunity are not new phenomena in El Salvador. In fact, a dosage of all these have become an integral part in the construction of the Salvadoran identity and establishment of the nation-state. More recently, in the face of a polarized political party system, the death of gang members and *presumed* gang members have become an integral part of electoral politics. Within the context of the gang phenomenon, right-wing ARENA party

led punitive electoral campaigns against gangs to win votes in the early 2000s. Precisely, these campaigns culminated in the Mano Dura projects. However, this form of punitive politics has racist roots in El Salvador that can be traced back (but not exclusively) to the ethnocide of indigenous peasants in 1932. On this year, the Salvadoran military led by General Maximiliano Hernández Martínez killed at least 30,000 indigenous peasants in a period of seven months. What led to this ethnocide was the logic to *punish* peasants who had the potential to become sympathizers of communist ideals. In this scenario, punitivism becomes some sort of logic and reason to kill to restore security among the wealthy class. As formerly stated, decades before the modern punitive populism we see in El Salvador, the military has shaped the continuous edification of the Salvadoran nation-state whereby violence becomes a defining element for the maintenance of peace and security—one that has historically privileged the Salvadoran oligarchy and upper class. In other words, the weaving of the Salvadoran social fabric depends on the racist and classist use of state violence to achieve 'peace' whereby "the dead provide the raw materials for this politics; their bodies, their gender, their location, and their scars and mutilations are the basis for weaving" (Wright 2011) the Salvadoran national identity. In short, punitive militarism has been extremely violent, anti-indigenous and anti-communist; and modern-day punitive populism against gangs follows an anti-terrorist militaristic logic, which alike the other two, are Eurocentric articulations of the undesirables in Salvadoran society.

The Social Psychology of State Violence: The Manufacture of Insecurity, Fear, and Anxiety

Presently, while abuses committed by the FAES and PNC result in physical wounding, other forms of abuses result in chronic psychological wounding. It is precisely the social psychology of state violence an area of study that has been neglected by Salvadoran psychologists, which is the discipline I was brought up with during my college studies in the US.

The irony of the field of liberation psychology—which places an emphasizes on state violence—lies in that the man who pioneered this field was murdered by members of the US-backed Salvadoran army in 1989. In an attempt to revitalize this analytic framework provided by liberation psychologist Ignacio Martín-Baró, I will showcase how state violence not only cripples bodies but the social psychology of civilians. During an informal cell-phone conversation I had with Sandra (pseudonym), she said she moved to a new neighborhood because the one where she and her family previously lived had become more insecure and dangerous. Not surprisingly, the insecurity was produced by the presence and patrolling of state agents who were increasingly arresting and threatening the people who lived there. His 10-year-old son did not escape the gaze of the state agents. On multiple occasions, state agents were close to killing his 10-year-old son because he happened to live in that neighborhood. One day, following an altercation between the police and members from that neighborhood, Sandra's mother asked the policemen why they arrest, threaten and treat the minors like criminals. The police asked her if her grandson was injured. Then, one of the policeman proceeded to say that if the kid was not physical hurt, then "que no joda" (told her to go fuck herself). Although this illustration plays a minor role in my thesis, it is a significant one for it showcases how some agents of the state define injury: one that is physical and not psychological. According to this logic, psychological trauma is non-existent even when children and young men are repeatedly exposed to near-death experiences and daily psychosocial stressors.

Similarly, during my 2018 visit to El Salvador, I spoke to Manuel (pseudonym), a taxi driver whose son, a college student, was diagnosed with anxiety as a result of police harassment. Manuel tells me that one day the police violently entered his house to frisk his son because they had mistaken him for a gang member. "If it was not for me," Manuel tells me, "the police would

have beat him or arrested him" (personal communication 2018). This type of police violence ricochets across families and communities, for not only did the son develop anxiety, but his mom and dad as well. The parents fear, as it is the case of many Salvadoran parents from working-class background, that one day their children will be arrested, taken to prison, be seriously injured, or even killed by state agents. Another source of fear and anxiety is induced by the acknowledgement that the state will not prosecute the perpetrators, and justice will not be served. So can we really say that an anxious and fearful society, institutional impunity, and violence are elements in the construction of a secure and peaceful Salvadoran society?

I was fortunate to have been the listener to the stories told by Sandra and Manuel; but stories like these often go unsaid. In the face of human rights violations committed by agents of the state, official reports do not accurately account for the number of abuses. That is, there are many more cases of state violence within the context of the gang phenomenon that go unreported. In the case of Sandra, a working-class woman who grew up in marginalized neighborhood, she does not know who to ask for help when her safety or that of her family are threatened by agents of the state. But even if she knew who to turn to for help, the code of silence that surrounds her day-to-day reality discourages her, and others like her, from reporting the abuses by the FAES and PNC in fear of retaliation from state agents. Women like Sandra are particularly vulnerable to violence. The violence that these girls and women encounter include structural violence (i.e. poverty) as well as violence that can come from either the gangs or state agents, including sexual violence.

Extraordinary Measures as Permanent

Since the extraordinary measures were implemented, the annual homicide rates have decreased. Given these statistics, the PDDH concluded that the extraordinary measures were

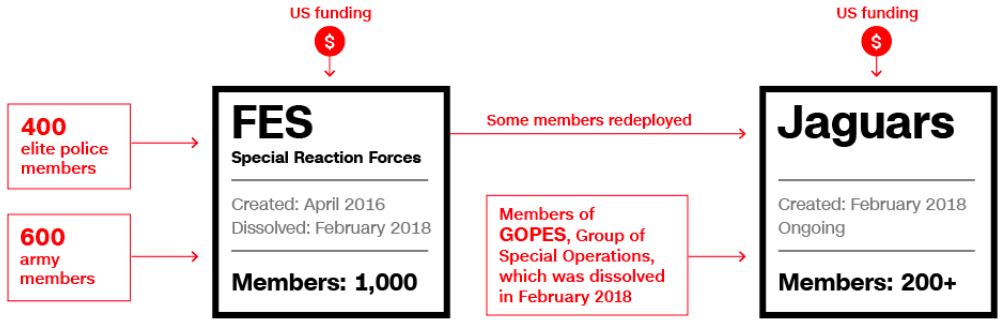
effective in the reduction of homicides. However, the statistics reported on extortion, injuries, disappearances, threats, rape and robberies stayed relatively the same, despite the implementation of the extraordinary measures. Further, the PDDH observed that there has been a rise in human rights violations committed by state agents since the implementation of this security project. These violations were committed both inside and outside of prisons, as I have previously presented. However, in a cultural context of fear and silence, it is important to note that out of the 1,200 denunciations against police officers and soldiers that were reported in 2016, there are many more denunciations that were not made. In 2016, the University Institute of Public Opinion (IUDOP) found that 82.2% percent of surveyed participants believed that it is urgent to investigate cases of abuse committed by the National Civilian Police and military (Escalante Saracais 2016). But even though there is an urgency expressed among civilians to investigate cases of human rights abuses, it does not mean that people are reporting these violations, so many cases of abuse by state agents go unreported.

Despite the human rights violations committed by agents of the state since 2009, the state has continued to grow its repressive apparatus. By 2018, the PNC had four special forces that included the FES, Grupo de Operación Especial (GOPES)[44], Sección Táctica Operativa (STO)[45], and the Grupo de Reacción Policial (GRP)[46]. On February 14, Howard Augusto Cotto, Director for the PNC, announced the creation of a new task force called the Unidad Táctica Especializada Policial (UTEP)[47], also known as "Jaguares" (Jaguars). This new task force is sort of the crème of the crème of the joint military-police groups for its members are selected from the FES and the GOPES – two police sections that have been accused of multiple extrajudicial killings. It is

[44] Special Operation Group
[45] Tactical Operation Section
[46] Police Reaction Group
[47] Special Police Tactical Unit

not clear how many police officers and soldiers have been assigned to comprise the Jaguars, but it is known that the FES and GOPES both largely consist of the FAES. Hence, the Jaguars might as well be a military task force assigned to operate in civil security matters. It is important to note that the United States has funded the Salvadoran police and has particularly provided financial support to the FES (Walsh, Arvanitidis, & Avelar 2018). Furthermore, Deputy Director General of the Police, César Baldemar Flores Murillo, announced that the United States has trained, equipped and armed jaguars with Windham rifles 7.62x39 (Avelar 2018). Additionally, César Ortega, the leader of Jaguars, expressed that "the US participates in training as well as providing equipment," "The only thing that the US government does not supply is lethal equipment, the weapons and the ammunitions" (Walsh, Arvanitidis, & Avelar 2018).

Figure 3: US-funded units: Who are the FES and Jaguars?



Source: National Civil Police (PNC) statements (Walsh, Arvanitidis, & Avelar 2018)

The GRP underwent a process of disarticulation due to the human rights violations that GRP agents were accused of. Therefore, agents of the GRP were not (explicitly) selected to be a part of this newly formed police section called the Jaguars. On March 15, 2015, agents of the GRP were accused of committing the San Blas Massacre; however, these agents were let free by the General Prosecutor of the Republic shortly after because he could not identify who exactly, among these officers, killed Dennis. Furthermore, on December 28, 2017, an agent of the GRP

forcibly disappeared fellow agent Carla Ayala after they had both attended a party that was held at the headquarters of the GRP. Fellow agent Juan José Castillo "wounded and deprived (Carla) of liberty" (Avelar 2018), and according to witnesses, Juan José screamed at Carla "this is what you wanted, right bitch?" (Andrade 2018) before wounding her inside one of the police cars he had access to on this night. This event is one of many unsolved cases that point to state agents as the perpetrators of the violence for reports suggest agents of the GRP could have arrested him, but did not. Moreover, according to Fiscal Chief Guadalupe Echeverria, the version provided by the GRP was blurry, "confusing and unlikely." After attempts at investigating agent Castillo and others involved, the General Prosecutor of the Republic realized someone had infiltrated the case and alerted all agents under investigation (Avelar 2018), thus truncating the investigation. On September 6, 2018 Carla Ayala's body was found in a cladestine crave in cantón Los Ríos, de San Francisco Javier. To this day, her murderer is still on the run. Despite the crimes committed by agents of the GRP, there was a loophole that permitted the incorporation of agents of the GRP and STO into the Jaguars. Particularly, in the event that agents of these two task forces are left without any tasks – as it was with the disarticulation of the GRP – then these agents can be incorporated into the Jaguars task force.

Figure 4: The composition of the Jaguars. Image titled, 'from one thing to the same.'

Source: Avelar 2018

By the time of this writing, many people have lost their lives at the hands of state agents, and many others have been physically and psychologically wounded by the state's apparatuses of (in)security. Amidst these deaths and harm, on April 6, 2018 the Legislative Assembly approved a six-month extension of the Extraordinary Measures. So too on June 4, 2018 Mauricio Ramírez Landaverde, the Minister of Justice and Public Security, addressed the Security Commission of the Legislative Assembly with a document that seeks to reform the Penitentiary Law. In other words, this document proposed a legislature to make the extraordinary measures permanent inside prisons. Consecutively, on June 11, 2018 the Executive branch presented eleven reforms to the Penitentiary Law to the Legislative Assembly. These eleven reforms serve the same purpose as the formerly mentioned. For FESPAD, extending the extraordinary measures will imply to keep "an open door to permanent and systematic human rights violations." FESPAD is one of many local human rights organizations that has paid attention and denounced the violence

perpetrated by state agents under these measures. But due to the severity of these violations, a look at state violence has transcended national boundaries and reached international organization like the United Nations. In fact, on February 5th, 2018, in the face of the institutional conversations about whether to make these measures permanent or not, the Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions of the United Nations, Agnes Callamard, expressed the following about the extraordinary measures,

> The implementation of extraordinary security measures has led to the prolonged detention of thousands of people, including preventive detention, in cruel and inhumane conditions. The security concerns alone do not explain the conditions I have witnessed, which leads me to conclude that such measures are implemented with the main purpose of dehumanizing detainees. Such measures must be stopped immediately.

As I have presented in this thesis, the extraordinary measures systematically perpetuate human rights abuses both inside and outside of prisons. Under these measures, more people are being incarcerated and their rights are violated in a myriad of ways such as keeping prison conditions in unlivable conditions and conditions of contagion. By 2000, there were 7,800 in Salvadoran prisons, and by 2017, the number had increased to 38,700 inmates—that is, an average increase of 1,817 incarcerated people per year (FESPAD 2018) since 2000. With the passing of extraordinary measures as permanent, the prison population will increase and so will the human rights violations. But let's continue the example of Landaverde who in 2018 addressed the Security Commission of the Legislative Assembly with a document that seeks to reform the Penitentiary Law to make the extraordinary measures permanent inside prisons. The reforms forwarded by Landaverde petition to permanently incorporate the Penitentiary Law in the Extraordinary Measures. According to Landaverde, the policies that were implemented in prisons under the Extraordinary Measures gave favorable results, such as "reduction in the indexes of homicides and other crimes committed by orders emanating from the interior of the

centers" (Asamblea Legislativa 2018). That is, the basis of this proposal is the reduction of homicides rates since the measures were implemented in 2016. However, as you read in earlier sections of this chapter, the Human Rights Ombudsman Office stated that even though homicides rates decrease, other forms of crime and violence did not; meanwhile the reports on human rights abuses increased and have been attributed to the agents who were assigned to carry out these measures.

Reforms to the Penitentiary Law

The document forwarded by Landaverde petitions the creation of Prisons of Maximum Security designed for "highly dangerous" inmates, and gives the Director of Penitentiary Centers the executive power to decide the organization of prisons. The executive power that could be given to the head of the penitentiaries creates a safe haven for the violation of human rights of prisoners. To give an example, the director could have the executive power to decide how and when family visits are allowed and under what conditions. There is already talk that family visits will be restricted, while conjugal visits will no longer be allowed at all. In a like manner, in Maximum Security Prisons, which are in the proposal by Landaverde, family visits and conjugal visits will not be permitted. Additionally, when families can visit inmates the visit will be executed under the presence of a security guard and controlled through technological means, like on-site phones lines. One thing that caught my attention was the way in which Landaverde envisioned the functioning inside these prisons. That is, the prison reforms provided in this document mirror the US prison model whereby visitors and inmates communicate behind a glass and through a phone.

Moreover, the reforms to the Penitentiary Law include that anyone (be it residential or commercial) who provides phone reception or Wi-Fi signal within a prohibited perimeter will be

subject for inspection (Asamblea Legislativa 2018). In theory, if the resident does not consent to an inspection, a judicial order will be granted within 24 hours to enter the premise. Consequently, the technology that is facilitating reception or Wi-Fi will be confiscated. If the same resident is caught for a second time, she or he will be given a penalty fee equivalent to a month's income equal to the commerce and service sector, $304.17 (Ministerio de Trabajo y Previsión Social). By incurring the third offense, the resident will be given a penalty fee equivalent to twenty-month's income equal to the commerce and service sector, $6,083.4. These fees will be enforced by the General Superintendent of Electricity and Telecommunications. In a country where the telecommunications system was privatized, the collaboration between the telecommunication system and carceral expansion becomes an interesting subject of inquiry.

Additionally, under the proposed reform the Director of Penitentiary Centers will be granted executive power to immediately suspend without pay or fire employees whose functions imply a threat to the prison administration. On a rather neglected and unfinished section of the document, the reform encompasses a re-integration-oriented model, but it does not go further into how these policies will be implemented or what these educational projects look like. But according to this reform, inmates will participate in "activities of educational nature and of training work habits, seeking their re-adaptation and insertion in society and that are essential for an adequate coexistence" (Reforms to the Penitentiary Law, 2018). While some people will argue that the state is doing something to re-integrate formerly gang members into society, I insist that these efforts are minimal compared to the resources invested in the criminalization of the working-class sectors of Salvadoran society. In this manner, the punitive Right Hand of the state seeks to co-exist with the Left Hand of the state as if violence and peace can peacefully co-exist. For this reason, I stress that the continuation of the extraordinary measures inside and

outside of prisons are an expression of violence in a nation-state that claims to be a peaceful democracy.

International Reports

Contradictions… occur at the interstate level. U.S. representatives… may criticize the deplorable human rights record of specific countries at the same time that the United States is providing arms, military aid, and training on terror techniques to the militaries and police officers of the same countries. Indeed, these contradictions have an iconic twist: often the granting of military aid is conditioned on respect for human rights.[48]

The United Nations[49], Amnesty International[50], the Organization of American States' Inter-American Commission on Human Rights[51], and the U.S. Department of State[52] have written human rights reports condemning the human rights violations committed by the PNC and FAES. Some reports like the one written by Callamard, United Nations Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, urged the Salvadoran government to end the extraordinary measures immediately (Callamard 2018). Yet, the Salvadoran government has turned its cheek the other way and has not taken accountability for the abuse committed by its agents against gang members, presumed gang members, families and innocent people. These people have not only endured psychological trauma, torture, threats, but also sexual abuse (Avelar & Martínez d'Aubuisson 2017), yet the Salvadoran government has considered passing a legislature that will make the extraordinary measures permanent. As I have presented above, the main argument the Salvadoran government stands on is that the extraordinary measures have decreased homicide rates. In this way, the extraordinary measures have been used as a form of

[48] See more on "When States Kill. Latin America, the U.S., and Technologies of Terror," by Menjívar and Rodríguez (2005).
[49] For more read "Gobierno defiende las medidas extraordinarias cuestionadas por la ONU" by Bryan Avelar (2018).
[50] Amnesty International 2017-2018 Report on El Salvador
[51] IACHR Calls on El Salvador to Not Renew Extraordinary Measures in Detention Centers (2018).
[52] El Salvador 2017 Human Rights Report

punitive populism whereby the FMLN sought to win electoral votes in exchange of deploying joint police-military task forces and securitizing prisons and the streets. In the words of former vice president Oscar Ortíz,

> We have finished the year 2017 with very good results, when we started the extraordinary measures we started with 22.4 homicides a day, we closed 2017 with an average of 10.6 homicides, we have achieved more than half of the homicide reduction in only two years after the implementation of the Extraordinary Measures.

Additionally, according to the Ministry of Justice and Public Security, there were 6,657 homicides in 2015 while homicides were reduced to 3,954 in 2017 (Ministerio de Justicia y Seguridad Pública 2018). Besides tighter control in prisons and the worsening of prison conditions, agents of the FAES and PNC have committed a variety of human rights violations—extrajudicial killings being a popular one, especially by agents of the FES. As a matter of fact, the number of gang members and presumed gang members killed in confrontations is disproportionately higher than those of police officers or soldiers. According to the statistics presented in a journalist report, "in 2016, the Salvadoran PNC had a ratio of one officer killed for every 53 presumed gang members slain" (Valencia 2016). These deaths have been majority caused by shots in the heads, chest, and abdomen, which highlights the type of training the agents have had prior to killing these people. In other words, agents of the FAES and PNC aim to kill as if they were in a context of war.

As previously outlined, the extraordinary measures are part of a larger security strategy executed under the Sánchez-Cerén government (2014-2019). In fact, the extraordinary measures work hand in hand with the Five-Year Plan, the National Policy of Justice, Public Safety, and Coexistence, and the Plan for Safe El Salvador. Regarding the human rights violations committed under the Plan for Safe El Salvador, the UN High Commissioner for the Human Rights, Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein expressed that regardless of the crime and violence by gangs,

they do not deserve to be killed in the ways they have under these measures. He asserted that "all perpetrators of violence need to be held fully accountable for their actions through judicial mechanism. Victims on all sides deserve justice" (United Nations 2017). His statement implies that the state's violence against gangs in the form of extrajudicial killings, mass incarceration, poor prison conditions, rape, and torture is not justified.

CHAPTER 3
Made in the USA: Exporting Violence to the Pulgarcito de América

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U.S. Imperialism in Latin America and the School of the Assassins

Since the 1973 CIA-backed coup d'état against democratically elected president Salvador Allende, the United States aggressively put into action its Monroe Doctrine and Manifest Destiny inclinations toward Latin America. Consequently, there was an increase in U.S. economic, political and military advisees as well as U.S. funding, training, and advisory of Latin American intellectuals, politicians, and soldiers. One of the US institutions that played a key role in this time was the School of the Americas (SOA). The SOA was founded in 1946 in Panama. The school recruited Latin American soldiers to train them in counterrevolutionary military intelligence. Later, in 1984 the SOA opens in the state of Georgia. Below is a summary of Gils (2004) ethnographic account at the School of the Americas, which summarizes the imperialistic and interventionist doctrine being taught at this institution. After Gil's account, I will present a brief discussion about the human rights violations committed by some of the School of the Americas graduates in El Salvador.

Although the quote is lengthy, it is descriptively rich enough to quote in its entirety: "The SOA, or the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation as the army now likes to call it, sits deep within Fort Benning, a sprawling army base on the southern edge of Columbus, Georgia. The institution bristles with imperialistic symbolism. Emblazoned on the School's crest is the Spanish galleon on which Christopher Columbus conquered the Caribbean, and inscribed around the edge is the SOA motto, 'One for all and all for one.' This slogan comes from the Monroe Doctrine, James Monroe's message to Congress in 1832 articulating the nascent

imperial ambitions of the United States by seeking the exclusion of its European rivals from the Americas. The words continue to describe the imperial unity that the School seeks to build among the contemporary militaries of the Americas." Gils elaborates that it is precisely at this school where Latin American soldiers are trained in counterinsurgency tactics, becoming the most notorious human rights violators in Latin America, particularly in El Salvador.

Gil argues that U.S. imperialism is the "intrusion of U.S. economic interests into other countries and extends to the multiple and varied practices of political, military, and cultural domination." She continues, "military bases, weapons, and strategic alliances with local security forces constitute the cutting edge of the U.S. empire in which the [North] American state rules through the control of territory than through the penetration and manipulation of subordinate states that retain considerable political independence." Lastly she asserts that "imperialism unfolds at the local level through a variety of power-laden relationships between unequal social actors. The security forces—militaries, paramilitaries, militarized police forces—constitute one of the most basic forms of imperial intrusion and control" which enforce laws and ideologies required to maintain dominant groups in power. Gils definition of imperialism is useful to articulate the social relations between the United States and Central America. That is, the United States has trained Central American soldiers, through the SOA, as a method for maintaining territorial control over Central American resources, economic, and political life as part of U.S.'s Manifest Destiny and Monroe Doctrine agendas amidst a neoliberal economic ascendance. In this sense, the United States conceives Central America as their 'back-yard,' thus justifying economic and political imperialist interventions over the region. For example, with the historic cascades of events such as the victory of the Cuban Revolution in 1959, the monumental electoral victory of Marxist Chilean president Allende in 1970, the U.S. troops defeat in Vietnam

in 1975 and the Nicaraguan revolution in 1979, the United States feared that "communist" ideologies will continue to have a domino effect in Latin America, thus generating more revolutions, such as in the 1980s in El Salvador. Defining imperialism, then, allows us to name the geopolitical and economic policies that the United States has created in Latin America to maintain its ideological and militaristic hegemony in the region.

U.S.-backed Salvadoran Military: The Puppets of the US Empire and Violence in El Salvador

Moreover, Gil asserts that Latin American soldiers at the SOA receive various trainings. These trainings include techniques for waging small-scale strikes, counterterrorism activities, psychological operations, foreign internal defense, "unconventional" warfare (i.e. support of military and paramilitary operations against a standing government), and "such other activities as may be specified by the President or the Department of Defense" (Gill 2004). Notably in El Salvador, in 1961 José Alberto Medrano founded the Organización Democrática Nacionalista (ORDEN) (Democratic Nationalist Organization), the first counterinsurgent vigilante system in El Salvador. For some, ORDEN "the Spanish word for order, appears to have been a counterinsurgency effort inspired by the strong anti-Communism of the Kennedy Administration" (Lemoyne 1987). In fact, Medrano was advised by North Americans, and received training at the International Police Academy. Moreover, Medrano also founded ORDEN's intelligence branch called ANSENAL[53].

The fact that SOA graduates like General Medrano have founded repressive apparatuses in El Salvador must tell us something about the purpose of the SOA: that is, the SOA has trained US puppets to do the dirty work of repression for the benefit of their Latin American economic

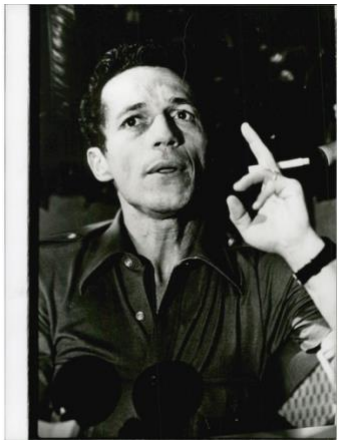
[53] Angencia Nacional de Servicios Especiales de El Salvador (ANSENAL), formerly known as the Sistema Nacional de Inteligencia (SNI).

and political allies as well as for the ultimate geopolitical control of the United States over the region. In fact, Medrano was one SOA graduate who left a legacy of impunity and crimes against humanity. Other examples include Roberto D'Aubuisson, founder of the U.S.-backed dead squads, and Colonel Natividad de Jesús Cáceres Cabrera, second-in command of the U.S.-trained Atlacatl battalion that carried out the 1981 El Mozote Massacre, who were advised and trained in the United States at the School of the Americas (Gill 2004). Other figures such as José Antonio Castillo - head of intelligence for the Guardia Nacional (National Guard) - was also advised and trained in the United States. The foundations of the Salvadoran military, paramilitary and police institutions such in the case of the National Police, National Guard, Police of the Hacienda, ORDEN, ANSENAL, the Armed Forces and battalions followed a U.S.-sponsored anti-communist and militaristic logic. From the beginning, these institutions became repressive state apparatuses which sought to control the population through fear and psychosocial terror, so much so that "in the early 1980s, there no longer appeared to be a single central point of political power or authority," (Menjívar and Rodríguez 2005), thus generating more confusion, fear, and insecurity among civilians.

Figure 5: General José Alberto Medrano aka ‘Chele’, founder of ORDEN and ANSENAL

Source: Foto de Archivo, El Salvador Times

Figure 6: Roberto D’Aubuisson Arrieta, co-founder of Death Squads and right-wing ARENA party



Source: IMS Vintage Photos

Figure 7: Colonel Natividad de Jesús Cáceres Cabrera, second-in command of the U.S.-trained Atlacatl battalion

Source: Jeremy Bigwood

Table 3: Military and Police Forces in El Salvador before 1980

State Agency	Number of Agents
Municipal Police	2,000
Customs Police	2,000
Treasure Police	5,000
National Police	5,000
National Guard	6,000
Regular Armed Forces	16,000
Paramilitary Groups	40,000
Total	76,000

Source: Menjívar and Rodríguez (2005), and Instituto de Derechos Humanos (1988)

By the 1970s, the coffee growing oligarchy (known as the 'fourteen families[54]') owned most of the land and wealth of El Salvador. In the same years, Salvadoran state agents were called to protect the economic interest of the oligarchy. In fact, between 1986 and 1988, "250 Salvadoran officials were trained in the United States" (Costa 1999, 49). Consequently, these officials returned to El Salvador to repress any form of dissidence against the status quo. However, poverty and violence peaked during the 1970s, leading to a stronger discontent among working-class Salvadorans against the source of these problems. Under these circumstances,

[54] Oligarchy consisted of 14 families: Hill, Dueñas, Regalado, Wright, Guirola, Sol, Daglio, De Sola, Quiñones, Llack, Borja, Garcia, Pireto, Salaverria and Meza Ayau. For more see, "Voices from El Salvador" by Mario Menendez Rodriguez.

state agents responded with systematic forced disappearances, tortures, sexual violence, massacres, day-light targeted killings, psychological warfare and other forms of counterrevolutionary repression.

The Salvadoran Army Before the Civil War: A Look at the Beginnings of Salvadoran State Agents

State violence was not new in El Salvador in the 1970s. As a matter of fact, in 1912 the Policía Nacional (National Police) and Guardia Nacional (National Guard) were created to appease dissatisfaction in the coffee fields. From the beginning, the police have abused their authority to 'neutralize' any potential threats to the status quo, namely the Salvadoran land-owning oligarchy. Two decades later, the Policía de Hacienda (Police of the Hacienda) was created in 1933. The Police of the Hacienda eventually became a major institution of human rights violations during the Salvadoran civil war in the 1980s.

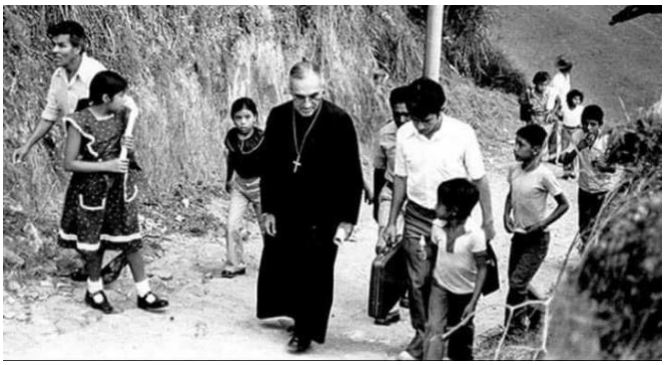
Historically, the country's political rulers had always come from the military, therefore their doctrine followed militaristic models too. In 1931[55], months after the democratic election of President Arturo Araujo, a coup d'état was carried out by General Maximiliano Hernández Martínez against Araujo. Consequently, General Martínez established himself as the new president; but beside the Salvadoran oligarchy, not everyone approved of his dictatorial regime. Then, on January of 1932 a large group of Salvadorans together with the Communist Party under

[55] Within the context of institutional racism and militarized violence rose an Afrodescendant and indigenous woman to become the first woman in Latin America to run for office. In 1931, Prudencia Ayala, daughter of a single mother, ran for office at the time when Salvadoran women were not allowed to vote. Despite the sexist and racist ridiculed she endured, she actively spoke out against the United States' involvement in Nicaragua, wrote pamphlets about a Central American union, and became a historical figure in the women's suffrage movement. Prudencia did not win the elections, but has won the hearts of many who applaud her leadership, courage, and visionary politics. Retrieved from: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7Zqap0omZVA

Farabundo Martí's[56] leadership rose up against the dictatorship of Maximiliano Hernandez Martinez (TeleSUR 2015). But on January 31st, Farabundo Martí was sentenced to death and killed on the following day by a firing squad. Simultaneously, between January and July of 1932, General Martínez – a fond follower of fascists Adolf Hitler and Benito Mussolini – ordered the ethnocide[57] of over 30,000 indigenous people (Cárcamo 2012) in response to a series of peasant uprisings[58] and to instill fear among land-owning indigenous peasants. As a result of this massacre, many indigenous people went into hiding, and a large part of the indigenous language and other cultural expressions were lost during this period. Furthermore, in 1933 General Maximiliano Martínez created the Restrictions and Limitations to Immigration Law. This law permitted the exile of Afrosalvadorans and prohibition of Afro-descendants, "Malays," and "Gypsies" from entering the country (Esmahan 2016; La Prensa Grafica 2011). Even though General Martínez remained in power until 1944, the ties between the Salvadoran oligarchy and the United States have remained intact. Regarding the role of the United States in matters of civil security, "US assistance to the Salvadoran security forces began in the early 1960s" (Costa 1999). Specifically, between 1962-1974, approximately 500 thousand policemen throughout the world, and 300 Salvadoran soldiers, received training and equipment from the United States. During the same period, El Salvador received more than 2 million dollars in arms and police equipment (*ibid*), foreshadowing the US-El Salvador relations in the years to come.

[56] Farabundo Martí studied at the University of El Salvador, but decided to join the organization of the masses against Martínez' military dictatorship. In 1925, Martí founded the Central American Communist Party. His legacy became imprinted after the naming of the Farabundo Martín National Liberation Front (FMLN).
[57] Historically known as the 1932 Massacre
[58] Indigenous people from Nahuizalco, Sonsonate, with the support of Afrosalvadorans from Atiquizaya and Turin, Ahuachapán, participated in the 1932 peasant uprising. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_xA6G0lnGg4&t=1476s

Figure 8: Arbishop Monseñor Oscar Arnulfo Romero arriving at Nuestra Señora de Lourdes for a pastoral visit shortly before his death



Source: Association of Our Lady of Mount Carmel

One of the major sources of US hegemony and Salvadoran oligarchic ruling was religion. For some, religious practices were kept separate from political life. One example of this was Monsignor Oscar Arnulfo Romero. Romero was a Salvadoran Archbishop, liberation theologist and pioneer in the politics of accompaniment. At first, Monsignor Romero was rather apathetic toward the suffering of the people at the hands of the army and police (Sobrino 2006); but at age 54 he underwent a spiritual and political transformation. Monsignor Romero realized that he could no longer remain neutral in times of injustice after his friend, father Rutilio Grande was assassinated by US-trained soldiers in 1977. Consequently, Romero became a popular religious leader who denounced poverty and military violence as structural sins. Moreover, many of his religious followers sought spiritual refuge during his masses, homilies, and visits to remote parts of the country. Romero's turn toward liberation theology made him a threat to the status quo. A day before his death, Romero gave a homily in which he condemned the violence sponsored by the military and police. The last words in this homily translate to, "In the name of God, in the name of this suffering people whose cries rise to heave more loudly each day, I implore you, I beg you, I order you in the name of God: Stop the repression!" But on March 24th of 1980, Roberto D'Aubuisson gave the order to assassin Monsignor Romero. The official shot Romero

right in the heart during mass. His death was profoundly symbolic for Salvadorans began to think, *if they [army] killed him, then they can kill anyone*. This reasonable logic re-affirmed the Salvadoran people that they could no longer achieve peace through peaceful and disorganized means, thus many joined the revolutionary forces to fight for justice, peace, and freedom from US economic and political hegemony.

Figure 9: Monsignor Romero's excerpt of his last homily

"Hermanos, son de nuestro mismo pueblo, matan a sus mismos hermanos campesinos y ante una orden de matar que dé un hombre, debe de prevalecer la Ley de Dios que dice: no matar… Ningún soldado está obligado a obedecer una orden contra la Ley de Dios… Una ley inmoral, nadie tiene que cumplirla… Ya es tiempo de que recuperen su conciencia y que obedezcan antes a su conciencia que a la orden del pecado… La Iglesia, defensora de los derechos de Dios, de la Ley de Dios, de la dignidad humana, de la persona, no puede quedarse callada ante tanta abominación. Queremos que el Gobierno tome en serio que de nada sirven las reformas si van teñidas con tanta sangre… En nombre de Dios, pues, y en nombre de este sufrido pueblo cuyos lamentos suben hasta el cielo cada día más tumultuosos, les suplico, les ruego, les ordeno en nombre de Dios: ¡Cese la represión!"

As a result of the extreme poverty and violence led by the US-backed Salvadoran oligarchy and military, extreme responses were born. Between the five revolutionary fronts[59] and Romero's assassination, Salvadorans had enough reasons to form a unified front that came to be known as the Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberación Nacional[60]. Under those circumstances, the United States funded and provided counterrevolutionary training to 'neutralize' the FMLN guerrillas and its sympathizers. In fact, during the 12-year armed conflict, the United States sent $6 billion (in addition to military equipment and training at the School of the Americas) to the Salvadoran government (Abrego 2014) to combat the FMLN and sympathizers. US military aid was overwhelming so much so that in 1991 the "system of Public Security that prevailed in El

[59] There were five different left-wing guerrilla organizations: Fuerzas Populares de Liberación Farabundo Martí (FPL), Ejército Revolucionario del Pueblo (ERP), the Resistencia Nacional (RN), the Partido Comunista Salvadoreño (PCS) and the Partido Revolucionario de los Trabajadores Centroamericanos (PRTC).
[60] The Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front was founded on October 10, 1980.

Salvador was strictly military and its main objective consisted of population control and political repression" (Costa 1999, 27). But simultaneously, the United States's hegemony over El Salvador was weakening. US-based solidarity organizations such as the School of the Americas Watch, the Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador, and other transnational activist organizations were crucial in dismantling the institutional lies that the US had instilled in the North American people about its role in Central America. In the end, Washington and the Salvadoran military called for a cease of fire when they realized they could potentially loose against the FMLN. The US did not want another Vietnam; and so in 1992, the Peace Accords of Chapultepec were signed between the army and the FMLN guerrillas in Mexico.

The Peace Accords: The Beginning of a Peaceful War

To transition from a militaristic regime to one of 'peace,' the Peace Accords stated that the Salvadoran army would undergo a process of depuration and reduction of its officials. The Salvadoran army agreed to "purge its officials, and reduce its personnel by 50 percent, as well as to demobilize the immediate reaction infantry battalions… [which were] its offensive combat units" (Costa 1999, 97). In effect, "two of its three components (The National Guard and Policía de la Hacienda) were dissolved and the third (army) drastically limited its functions to the police field." In other words, the Peace Accords delineated that armed state-sponsored institutions must be reduced significantly. Although the army did decrease the number of officials, they did not reduce its officials by 50 percent as it was agreed to. Moreover, the Peace Accords stated that the new Armed Forces of El Salvador were going to become an institution responsible for the defense of the state's sovereignty, and would be overseen by the Ministry of Defense.

But as I previously stated, the personnel were neither decreased as accorded nor the FAES responded exclusively to matters of national sovereignty. Yet, along with the so-called

depuration and the 'decrease' of military personnel came the creation of the National Civilian Police (PNC) who was assigned to promote "peace, tranquility, order and public security, both in urban and rural areas…. [and] it will be a new body, with new organization, new cadres, new mechanisms of information, training and new doctrine" (Chapter 2, 1. Peace Accords). That is, the new PNC was supposed to be created anew. However, the Peace Accords also stated that the PNC would be comprised of 20% of the FMLN militants, 20% of the National Police, and 60% of civilians. But, the PNC ended up being comprised of 52% National Police[61], 36% civilians, and 12% FMLN (Costa 1999, 258). While the FAES was now overseen by the Ministry of Defense, the PNC was now overseen by the Ministry of Interior and Public Security[62]. This means that these two institutions would now serve different roles and would be overseen by two separate state institutions. The reason why it was decided to create new police separate from the military was because of the reported human rights abuses committed by officials who belonged to these army. In effect, the Peace Accords clearly stated that each state apparatus would serve different roles.

Additionally, other factions of the police and army were also re-articulated. For example, the National Guard and Policía de la Hacienda became the Policía Militar (Military Police) and the Guardia de Fronteras (Border Guards), respectively. Yet, the Salvadoran army did not fully comply with its responsibilities. Regarding these two armed institutions, the Peace Accords stated that "the National Guard and the Police of the Hacienda will be suppressed [and will no longer serve as] bodies of public security. Its troops will be incorporated into the army" (Chapter 1, 6, C). Yet, during the first three years of the PNC's inception, more than 3,000 agents of the

[61] Not to be confused with the National Civilian Police which was founded in 1992 during the Peace Accords. The National Police was a military apparatus that operated in the years of popular repression and during the civil war.
[62] In 2006, the ministry changed its name to Ministry of Justice and Public Security For more read, the History of the Ministerio de Justicia y Seguridad Pública http://www.seguridad.gob.sv/historia/

National Guard and Police of the Hacienda joined the National Police – a formerly repressive institution – to collaborate in matters of civil security. In this way, the old regime refused to give up its institutional power, hence violating the Peace Accords. In fact, Costa asserts that the old military structure prevented,

> The suppression of the National Guard and the Police of the Treasury as public security bodies; continued with the successive strengthening of the National Police, the Police of the Treasury and the demobilized military units and culminated with the repeated reluctance to demobilize the National Civilian Police and several attempts to incorporate its members to the National Civilian Police. Another expression of the resistance to put an end to the old order was the efforts of civilian and military sectors to keep the military involved in public security functions…. The history of the first years of the National Civilian Police is the history of the resistance of the military – the main actors of the old regime – to change.

This infiltration of the old system into the new was justified under the logic that there were new forms of delinquency being born in El Salvador, hence arguing for a need to deploy trained officials to combat postwar crimes. It was not until 1994 that the National Police – the paramilitary unit - was deinstitutionalized (Costa 1999, 149), but its agents continued to operate without impunity. The formation of the PNC posed a threat to the Armed Forces' hegemony and economic privileges. For this reason, the Armed Forces made sure that its leadership remained incorporated in public security matters. Costa continues,

> The Armed Forces… sought to place in the key positions of the new institutions people who had their confidence [and] who had played a leading role in the old system, at the same time neutralizing the power that the FMLN might have... In this effort, they had the full support of the United States" (190). And "Since its deployment, all the most important command posts of the National Civil Police were occupied by personnel of military origin, including the divisions of Public Security, Criminal Investigation and Antinarcotics... [while] The FMLN personnel was marginalized. (211)

The excerpt above shows some of several successful attempts that were made to infiltrate the PNC from its nascence (Costa 1999; Silva Ávalos 2015; Aguilar 2016). According to Costa

(1999), many of the soldiers who were incorporated into the PNC did not enter the police academy. In fact, since high-ranking officials were appointed and/or joined leadership positions in the newly formed PNC, they infiltrated their former officials into the police (Costa 1999), thus bypassing the law and proper training. As a result, these high-ranking officials created a pipeline whereby human rights abusers were now hired to promote public security. Visibly, this infiltration led to the same policing practices with the same human rights abusers, but now under a different name.

In agreement with Costa, Jeannette Aguilar (2016) argues that there were repeated efforts to militarize the PNC since its inception. She states that "in the years that followed [the agreements], the successive top ranks in the military, in alliance with some ex-soldiers, were attentive to reconquer civil control spaces such as public security, alleging the emergence of new threats." And to make matters worse, according to Héctor Silva Ávalos (2015) the infiltration of the old public security regime into the PNC facilitated "transnational organized crime, especially drug trafficking and money laundering organizations" which "penetrated the political party system and the social fabric" (3). In short, the army neither decreased its number of officials as accorded in the Peace Accords, nor did it respect the formation of the newly formed civilian police nor left their violent and illegal tendencies behind. Lastly, it is important to note that neither the FMLN nor the United Nations were consulted to make these decisions (*ibid*). For this reason, some would argue that the lack of consultation and representation of the FMLN and the United Nations in the so-called disarticulation of armed institutions led to the infiltration of US-trained officials and human rights abusers into the newly formed national police.

Moreover, the infiltration of violators of human rights abusers into the newly formed PNC not only created the conditions for a continuum of human rights violations, but also for

organized crime. Salvadoran presidents Calderon Sol (1994-1999) and Mauricio Funes (2009-2014) have recognized the infiltration of organized crime in the PNC and government officials (Ávalos 2015). Yet, little has been done to get to the root of it. Instead, the creation of new threats, such as the MS 13 and Barrio 18 gangs, has been strategic in the masking of such crimes. Specifically, Silva Ávalos notes that anti-gang discourse has been strategic for the sustainability of organized crime for it distract attention from root causes to the symptoms. In fact, he argues, there has been an association between an "exclusive focus on public security" and the "practice of exclusion of references of organized crime from the official narrative" (16). For instance, the implementation of Heavy Hand policies in 2003 and 2004 coincided with the "transformation of one of the main gangs of dairy and people smugglers... [eventually] the general director who executed the Heavy Hand was expelled from the PNC and was identified of being an accomplice of a drug lord" (*ibid*). Furthermore, the Super Heavy Hand legislature was implemented around the time of "large public cases of deputies involved in money laundering and drug trafficking operations" (*ibid*) were exposed. Lastly, the 2012 gang truce coincided with the dissolvent of a strategic plan from the PNC's agenda that sought to prosecute the Cartel Texis. The Texis cartel is a drug and money laundering gang that operates in the west of El Salvador (*ibid*). Further, the author argues that since the 1980s El Salvador has been key in drug trafficking at a global scale, and its role is just as important as the role of its neighboring countries, such as Guatemala and Honduras. As an illustration, in 2011 it was estimated that between 622,000 and 700,000 kilos of cocaine crossed the Central American region (Ávalos 2015). These numbers are supported by the ONU which asserted that "The fact that (El Salvador) shares borders with Honduras and Guatemala suggests that more cocaine passes through the country than what the government recognizes" (Ávalos 2015, 63). However, given the press' overwhelming coverage on public

security and the heavy-handed political anti-gang discourses, it is easy sweep organized crime and violence under the rug. So it is not naïve to think El Salvador's role in drug trafficking is minimal, for there is limited media coverage and public political discussions on these issues. But the fact of the matter is that organized crime is as present as gang-related violence; yet, state institutions seem to target more aggressively the latter over the former.

Following the phenomenon of organized crime, one would think that gangs play an important role in drug trafficking, but they do not. Ávalos challenges this notion and argues that "both the State Department and the UN have concluded that gangs have a marginal relationship with drug trafficking in El Salvador... Washington has said: 'Salvadoran gangs ... have been related to street drug sales, but they do not tend to be an important component in the logistics chain of distribution of the posters... '" (79-80). Not surprisingly, "the Central American army has played a strategic role in trafficking of drugs" (*ibid*). In the case of El Salvador, Ávalos argues that the people in the Army who carried out operations in Ilopango, El Salvador during the eighties "ended up becoming leaders of organized crime groups during the following three decades" (68). Additionally, because El Salvador's national currency is the dollar, it is imperative to recognize the role El Salvador may plan in money laundering in the region.

Made in the USA: Tracing Human Rights Violations in El Salvador to U.S. Firearm Production

The following section deals with what I refer to as the 'exporting' of violence from the United States to El Salvador via U.S.-based firearms production. The Small Arms Survey identified at least 2,288 U.S.-based firearms producers between 1986 and 2010. These firearms were produced for the civilian, private security and law enforcement sectors. In the same years, 106,079,100 weapons were produced in the United States (i.e. including miscellaneous and

exported firearms), that is 4.4 million weapons for each year between 1986 and 2010. Similarly, firearms import in the United States have been large with around 500,000 units in the 1980s to about 3.5 million units by 2010.

The production of firearms can be narrowed down to four product categories: pistols, revolvers, rifles, and shotguns, "but since 2007 a number of firms [firearms licensees] have branched into other product segments" (Small Arms Survey 2013) such as grenade launchers and mortars. In the same period, the Small Arms Survey identified 2,228 U.S. firearms firms in the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) record. Table 1 shows the number of firearms manufacturers between 1986-2010. As it is observed in the records, there are 332 North American shotgun manufacturers, yet shotgun production is dominated by two top companies which are O.F. Mossberg/Maverick and Remington. Differently, Table 2 shows the total number of U.S. firearms manufacturers between the same period, only the data was assembled by product category. For instance, it can be observed that 26 firearms manufacturers produced all four product categories, while 1,692 focused on a single product category.

Table 4: Number of U.S. firearms manufacturers, 1986-2010, by product category

Product	No. of manufacturers between 1986-2010	No. of manufacturers that dominate the market	Characteristics
Pistols	721	20 firms	Inter-rank mobility
Revolvers	133	2	Ruger and Smith and Wesson
Rifles	1,817	1	Not specified on article.
Shotguns	332	2	O.F. Mossberg/Maverick and Remington

Source: Small Arms Survey 2013

Table 5: Number of U.S. firearms manufacturers, 1986-2010 by number of product category

Number of product categories (among pistols, revolvers, rifles, shotguns)	Number of firms	Percentage
4	26	1.1
3	67	2.9
2	503	22.0
1	1,692	74.0
Total	2,288	100.0

Source: Small Arms Survey 2013. Data compiled from ATF (1986-2010)

Although it may be assumed that the number of U.S. firearms production are 100 percent accurate, no comprehensive study has been done to identify a more accurate analysis of U.S. firearms production due to data limitations; this includes imports, exports, and used weapons. Underreporting of firearms production is the primary reason why data is limited. While U.S. companies report *some* product manufacturing to the ATF, they do not accurately do so. This is possible through various ways in which underreporting happens, including (a) poor reporting compliance, (b) firms never report data to the ATF in time, or (c) 'skip' reporting, and (d) adopt 'censored' reporting which allows them to produce firearms without reporting them to the ATF, especially during the first years of operation. Despite the accuracy in U.S. firearms productions, one thing is certain: the United States has produced more firearms between 1970 and 2010, than what they had produced toward the end of World War II. The high production of firearms in the United States is indicative of the role the United States plays in the international economy. While countries in Central America are agricultural producers and exporters, the United States plays a leading role in firearms production that are both consumed domestically, and internationally.

Violence analysist contest that portable firearms and gun violence present the "most dramatic threat to public safety in Latin America and the Caribbean" (Stohl and Tuttle 2008). As a matter of fact, reports indicate that between 73,000 and 90,000 people are killed each year from

gunshots (*ibid*), placing gunshots as the leading cause of death among young and adult Latin Americans. So you may be wondering what the United States has to do with these statistics? The United States has supplied Latin American allies with "mass quantities of weapons through proxy arms dealers" (*ibid*). For example, the United States, through the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), supplied the counter-revolutionary Nicaraguan-contras with AK-47 shotguns (a Russian product) "in order to maintain official 'deniability' of its involvement in the conflicts" (*ibid*). However, U.S. supply of AK-47 to the Nicaraguan-contras had a ripple effect. The AK-47s that were confiscated by the Sandinistas made their way through Honduras to reach the Salvadoran revolutionary movement of the FMLN which was in direct armed conflict with the US-trained Salvadoran soldiers.

But even with the exposed case of US exports of AK-47s to Nicaragua, there is limited data as to how many and which firearms have been exported to Latin America. Like the inaccuracy of the exact quantities of U.S. firearms production, it is puzzling to assert an accurate number and types of weapons that Latin American countries import from the United States. Yet, the data that is available can shed light to the economy behind the legal market of firearms production and trade. According to Stohl and Tuttle (2008), "in 2005 Latin America legally imported at least $175 million worth of small arms and light weapons, as well as ammunition and spare parts. The United States was the main supplier to the region, exporting almost $50 million worth of these weapons." This is not to say all firearms are imported from the United States. In fact, there are Latin American manufacturers that produce firearms, but their production capacity is small in scope; which means that Latin American firearms producers are not able to meet their domestic demands, hence rely on U.S. imports to satisfy their domestic needs.

On the other hand, illegal arms trade in Latin America is large, yet difficult estimate. For example, Central America occupies an important corridor for illicit activities, such as arms trade. Stohl and Tuttle rely on anecdotal evidence to suggest that the United States sent large quantities of firearms through Central America bound to aid both Colombian guerrillas and paramilitaries. The armed conflict between the U.S.-backed Colombian military and the leftist guerrillas resulted in at least 218,094 deaths. While 19% of the victims were combatants, 81% of the victims were civilians (Centro de Memoria Histórica). Both the legal and illegal firearms production, imports, exports, and trade place gunshots as the leading cause of death among young and adult Latin Americans. Similarly, violence analysts suggest that illicit firearms enter Latin America through the U.S.-Mexico border. These small arms comprise a large portion of the guns that get used by Mexican drug cartels, costing the lives of 4,000 people in 18 months (Stohl and Tuttle 2008). In Honduras, since 2011 81% of homicides were committed with firearms (Small Arms Survey 2016). In fact, in 2014 and 2015 Honduras police submitted 1,645 tracing requests to the ATF to trace the source of the firearms. Not surprisingly, 44 percent of the guns came from the United States (Small Arms Survey 2016). Since Honduras, Guatemala and El Salvador are strategic regions for illegal gun trade, it is not a revelation that the majority of deaths in Honduras result from gunshots. Lastly, FESPAD has asserted that guns play a role in the continuum of violence in El Salvador. According to this government organization, more than 60% of the violence and crime in El Salvador involve guns It is no surprise, then, that the illegal gun trade has made firearms accessible to civilians, gangs, groups who operate organized crime structures, and paramilitaries such as the Black Shadow—a clandestine anti-gang extermination group in El Salvador. As argued before, if the United States is one of the leading firearms productions in the world, and its firearms are imported in Latin America (or illegally traded),

then it is safe to argue that the United States' firearms producers and allied North American politicians are ultimately responsible for the violent deaths that occur in Latin America.

Central America does not fall behind these high statistics on gun violence and deaths. While violence analysists argue that Central America is one of the most violent regions in the world, I want to push forth an analysis that will allow us to de-center violence as the primary and defining characteristic of the Central American region. I want to make it clear that the primary manufacturers of such violence are North American companies who manufacture and profit from firearm production, exports, imports, and trades. That is, violence is made in the United States and exported to Central American countries. Particularly in Central America, the United States – through economic and political interventionist policies – has created the conditions for gun violence to exist. Indeed, in 2016 the Central American police and military received the largest U.S. aid since 2006. U.S. Congress approved more than $100 million to aid the Central American military, antinarcotic units and border security. Adam Isacson and Sarah Kinosian, journalists with the Washington Office on Latin America (WOLA), reported that the majority of these funds were destined to military and police training and equipment, including firearms. Furthermore, the funds were spent on the construction of police and military bases. Such funds U.S. funds are coming from both the U.S. Department of State and the U.S. Department of Defense. While this financial aid is directly coming from these two departments, the funds are delivered by the United States Southern Command or Southcom. Not surprisingly, Southcom is the combat unit responsible for U.S. military operations in Latin America and the Caribbean.

In El Salvador alone, the U.S. Special Forces and the U.S. Marine Corps Forces Special Operations Command are responsible for training security Salvadoran security forces. Curiously, in 2013 the Salvadoran military unit – known as Comando Hacha (ax command) – received U.S.

training to serve as advisors to the police in Iraq and Afghanistan. Salvadoran military collaborations in Iraq are not new. In 2008, top U.S. military officers praised El Salvador for being the only Latin American country still providing troops to the U.S.-sponsored war in Iraq.[63] By 2013, Salvadoran soldiers spent eight weeks in the Joint Security Forces Assistant Course, administered by the 162nd Infantry Brigade and held at the Joint Readiness Training Center, in preparation for their deployment to Afghanistan.[64] By 2018, both U.S.-sponsored wars in Iraq (2003-2011) and Afghanistan (2001-present) had costed the lives of at least 62,000 people; and only in Afghanistan roughly 116,000 have been wounded.[65] What this means is that there is a military pipeline in El Salvador that recruits civilians into the armed forces, consequently training them on the use of firearms as well as indoctrinating in them interventionist and militaristic solutions to social conflicts and to achieve desired goals.

As an illustration, the U.S.-backed Salvadoran military has had a historic record of human rights violations in its own territory. Gill (2004) maintains that the high-ranking perpetrators of large-scale massacres like the one in El Mozote village, were trained at the U.S. School of the Americas (SOA). While some may attribute El Mozote massacre as necessary in the combat of communist ideals in the western hemisphere, others think otherwise. In December 1981, Salvadoran SOA graduate Colonel Natividad de Jesús Cáceres Cabrera was second in command of the U.S.-trained Atlacatl battalion that carried out what has become the "Worst Massacre in Modern Latin American History."[66] Salvadoran soldiers carried out a scorched-earth

[63] Read more on "U.S. military chief thanks El Salvador for Iraq help" by Peter Cooney, REUTERS.
[64] Read more on "Salvadoran troops train at JRTC, deploy to Afghanistan" by Catrina Craig, U.S. Army official webpage.
[65] For more, read "*Update on the Human Costs of War for Afghanistan and Pakistan, 2001 to mid---2016" by Neta C. Crawford; "*Iraq Death Toll Reaches 500,000 Since Start Of U.S.-Led Invasion, New Study Says" by Kerry Sheridan, Huffington Post.
[66] "Remembering El Mozote, the Worst Massacre in Modern Latin American History" by Sarah Esther Maslin, The Nation.

operation in which they beat the men, raped young girls, and killed anyone and everyone at sight. On this December, the Salvadoran army killed nearly 1,000 civilians. The point I am trying to make with this example is that the SOA had an influential role in El Mozote massacre. As a matter of fact, ten SOA graduates participated in El Mozote massacre. And so one thing is for certain: El Mozote massacre would not have happened if it were not for the U.S.'s imperialist tendencies or the military equipment, training, and funding to high-ranking Salvadoran military officers and soldiers.

CONCLUSION

The Social Manufacturing of Terrorists and Punishment

"A Country Full of Terrorists"
-*El Diario de Hoy*, 8/28/2015

"You ask what is the solution to gangs? Easy. Place all the gang members inside the Cuscatlán Stadium and give them guns to kill each other."
-Jaime[67]

It is no coincidence the Salvadoran military and police are continuing to violate the human rights of civilians, only now under the justification of domestic and international security against the 21st century enemy: gangs. In 2015, the predominantly right-wing court[68] passed the Special Law against Acts of Terrorism of El Salvador. The law was first introduced in 2006, and its main purpose was to establish a legal route by which to sentence anyone or any groups that carry out acts of 'terrorism.' And in 2015, this law included "its financing and related activities, and that by the manner of execution, means and methods employed, evidencing the intention to provoke states of alarm, fear or terror in the population, by imminently endangering or affecting the life or physical or mental integrity of people, material goods of significant consideration or importance, the democratic system or the security of the State or international peace" (Asamblea Legislativa, decree 108). In asserting so, the law established that "those who are part of terrorist organizations, in order to carry out any of the crimes contemplated in this Law, will be punished with imprisonment of eight to twelve years. The organizers, chiefs, leaders will be punished with imprisonment of ten to fifteen years" (*ibid*). The key concerns that arise from this law are the manufacturing of legal concepts of terrorism, the legality of punishment within the context of the

[67] Pseudonym of university student. Retrieved from fieldnotes July 2015.
[68] La Sala de lo Constitucional de la Corte Suprema de Justicia

prison-industrial complex, and the role the state plays in providing security to the non-terrorist 'citizens' from this domestic threat. Soon after this law was implemented news outlets began to report gang-related news with statements such as, "A Country Full of Terrorists," and "14 convictions of 1,972 accusations for terrorism[69]." In short, the terrorist logic gave state institutions, particularly state agents, the power to further dehumanize gang members and those who they *perceive* to be gang members, thus worsening the already complicated polarized psyches that dichotomize the state-gangs relations. Ultimately, this law provided a legal justification by which to declare a war on gangs.

So what does the Law against Acts of Terrorism mean for people who do not belong to a gang? Salvadoran activists have argued that the anti-terrorist law, on the surface, appears to target and punish gangs. Yet when looked at it closely, this law has created the legal conditions by which anyone who displays any act of 'terrorism' (as defined by the law/state) will be labeled as terrorist, and thus punished as such. This implicates activist organizations and groups who have not always agreed with the ways in which Salvadoran politicians have met neoliberal demands. For example, under this law it becomes challenging for activists to challenge unjust laws implemented by the state, including the right-wing proposed legislatures to neoliberalize El Salvador (i.e. privatize water, privatize the mining industry). That is, peaceful actions such as occupying (or rather reclaiming) parks, streets and buildings are to be considered terrorist acts against the state. In this sense, the anti-terrorist law has implications for gangs, activists and the general non-elite population at large alike.

[69] El Diario de Hoy 5/13/2016

The Normality of Abnormality: Conceptualizing A Peaceful War to Understand Militarized Policing and the War Against Gangs

In this thesis, I have argued that the human rights violation committed by state agents, such as the National Civil Police (PNC) and the Armed Forces (FAES), against gang members—and against those who these agents *perceive* to belong to a gang—can be conceptualized using Bourgois' theory of *Political violence*. According to him, political violence is "directly and purposefully administered in the name of a political ideology, movement, or state such as the physical repression of dissent by the army or the police as well as its converse, popular armed struggle against a repressive regime" (2001). Using Bourgois' conceptualization of political violence, I argued that the ideologies behind the remilitarization of public security and the human rights violations committed against gangs are in part due to a legacy of militarized thinking and most recently the legalization of gangs as terrorist groups through the passing of the right-wing legislature the Special Law against Acts of Terrorism of El Salvador in 2015. Not surprisingly, in 2016 the leftist Sánchez-Cerén government implemented the anti-gang policy known as extraordinary measures, waging a 'war against gangs' by the nation-state and enforced through the abuse of authority and physical repression by state agents. To contextualize the physical repression against gangs and *presumed* gang members, I explore the Peace Accords and its implications on militarization (and demilitarization).

In 1992, the U.S.-backed Salvadoran military and the leftist guerillas signed the Chapultepec Peace Accords which put an end to a 12-year civil war that resulted in 75,000 deaths, 9,000 forced disappearances and half a million internal displacements. Around 85% of the reports made by survivors of the civil war attributed the violence they experienced to state

agents, paramilitary groups and death squads[70]. In a 'postwar' era, militarization of El Salvador has remained an institutional open wound. In 2008, the right-wing ARENA[71] party signed a decree that established the participation of members of the Fuerza Armada de El Salvador (FAES) in civil security. In 2009, six months after the historic victory of the leftist Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN), the recently elected President Mauricio Funes (2009-2014) signed a decree that established the continuation of joint police-military task forces in public security. The re-militarization of public security was made possible by a loophole in the Constitution. In fact, the Salvadoran constitution, which was re-written in 1992 as part of the Peace Accords, established that "at the discretion of the president, the Armed Forces could be disposed of exceptionally if the *ordinary* means for the maintenance of internal peace, tranquility and public insecurity have been exhausted (Art. 168, section 12, Constitution)" (Aguilar 2016, emphasis mine). Through this loophole, the Funes' administration was able to remilitarize public security. But why? The answer is not so evident. Let's consider the following. It is beyond doubt that the precedent ARENA administrations had already established an electoral system whereby promises of civil security became populist campaigns to win votes. But did the FMLN re-militarize public security to win electoral votes? It is unclear. But what is clear is that under the Funes' administration the military budget and funding increased in conjunction with more frequent reports of abuses of authority and human rights violations by the police and military. To reiterate, this institutional collaboration between the FAES and the PNC was justified under the constitutional loophole that *the Armed Forces could be disposed of exceptionally if the ordinary*

[70] Roberto D'Aubuisson, School of the Americas (SOA) graduate, co-founded the dead squads. In 1981, he founded the right-wing ARENA party and became its first leader. After transnational activist and political mobilization, the SOA changed its name to the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Operation (WHINSEC). WHINSEC continues to train soldiers worldwide in counterinsurgency tactics which include torture, disappearances, and assassinations.

[71] Alianza Republicana Nacionalista (Nationalist Republican Alliance).

means for the maintenance of internal peace, tranquility and public insecurity have been exhausted, and re-stated differently in a 2009 executive legislation in the following terms: "the Armed Force will support the national police [in the event that] the resources and efforts of the police are insufficient to reduce crime."[72] In other words, the loophole in the 1992 constitution left an open door for the military to continue to operate as apparatuses of the state in matters of civil security. As previously stated in this thesis, the 1992 constitution – although signed by both FMLN guerrillas and the army – was heavily influenced by high-ranking military agents who sought to maintain their institutional privileges and power (Costa 1999).

Despite the haunting legacy of a repressive Salvadoran military *and* the antagonistic history the military has had with revolutionary leftist groups, the FMLN government has relied on joint police-military task forces and physical repression against gangs and *presumed* gang members to ensure public security, and paradoxically, promote civil security and 'peace' in a postwar era. Precisely, my thesis argues that the fact that the FMLN has relied on the FAES to 'promote' civil security is a contradiction. Therefore, my work stresses that this paradox speaks to the larger economic and societal structures that uphold militarization in El Salvador, mainly sponsored by U.S. imperialism in the Central American region and its Salvadoran puppets who continuously profit from structural violence such as poverty and violence among civilians. By Salvadoran puppets I mean right-wing politicians who have exacerbated poverty, made the country a safe haven for neoliberal projects, and have enriched themselves off the suffering of the poor. Among these are included the governments of Alfredo Cristiani (1989-1994), Armando Calderon Sol (1994-1999), Francisco Flores (1999-2004), and Antonio Saca (2004-2009). A Salvadoran investigative publishing company, Equipo Maíz (2016), found that all together for

[72] See Decree No. 60

twenty years these governments have been responsible for *at least* 27 large-scale corruption acts, including theft in social enterprises. These acts of corruption have totaled in 4 thousand 024 million US dollars. In a small country of a population of roughly 6 million people, 4 thousand 024 million dollars would have drastically made a difference in people's lives had the money and social enterprises not been taken away from the development of the country and the wellbeing of its citizens. Moreover, the Salvadoran puppets I am referring to include high-ranking military agents who have gained economic and political privileges through the financial support the United States has sent to El Salvador to 'eradicate' violence (Costa 1999). In other words, it appears as it poverty and violence—mainly gang-related violence—must remain a problem, because such a problem has resulted to be profitable among privileged Salvadorans as well as a reason for the United States to continue to intervene in El Salvador and the Central American region at large. All in all, it has been an unrealistic expectation to hope for the FMLN to completely reverse all the damage ARENA did to the Salvadoran economy. But a more realistic expectation was that the FMLN would not justify violence and militarized policing as means to achieve peace—for it is clear to me that its leadership are very well aware of the extent of human rights violations that can be committed under the logic of warfare in institutions like the PNC and FAES.

Moreover, I argue that political violence—abuse of authority and repression by state agents against the Salvadoran poor, including gangs—must be contextualized in a postwar period, but not necessarily through the lens of a postwar peaceful democracy. In this way, a peaceful war follows a logic of warfare which is used to justify violent means to achieve peace in 'postwar' times. One would think that a postwar country in a transition to peace becomes peaceful. However, "the very notion of a *postwar* era can have the effects of deflecting attention

from the existence of subtler forms of violence" (Benson et al. 2008 as qutd in Menjívar 2011), or not so-subtle forms of physical repression such as militarized police violence that the state strategically articulates both as war, and yet, a means to achieve peace. Furthermore, amidst political repression against gangs and *presumed* gang members, violence, in the eyes of some, is necessary for the dismantling of gang structures and ultimately to achieve a peaceful society. However, such normalization of abnormal solutions (i.e. violence) is part of a state of war in which the state refuses to articulate violent social dynamics as war-like, and thus become disguised as necessary (violent) means to achieve peace. And so, the problem with the use of violence in a 'postwar' era is that it reaps what it seeks to end: violence at the expense of peace. But in the end, one cannot fight violence with violent means. Otherwise, this violence would become a war in times of peace—hence, a peaceful war. Given the analyses provided in my thesis, this work contributes to scholarship in feminist studies, Central American Studies, political sociology, the sociology of post-traumatic stress, the psychology of post-traumatic stress, urban violence, and the social psychology of warfare.

Towards Justice, Peace, and un Buen Vivir

The FMLN has made great advances for the people of El Salvador. Under the two 5-year long presidencies (2009-2019), the leftist leadership implemented several social programs and legislatures that sought to promote un buen vivir among sectors of society that were affected by wars, corruption, and neoliberal projects such as the dollarization and privatization of electricity. Fortunately, the 2009 historic victory of the FMLN coincided with other Latin American governments that pioneered the socialism of the 21st century[73]. Un Buen Vivir or Sumak Kawsay, was a leading principle adopted by the Latin American left in the 2000s. According to

[73] Some included Fidel Castro in Cuba, Hugo Chávez in Venezuela, Rafael Correa in Ecuador, Evo Morales in Bolivia, Néstor and Cristina Kirchner in Argentina, and Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva in Brasil.

Cabnal (2010) Sumak comes from the Ecuadorian Quichua and expresses life with integrity. Kawsay comes from the Bolivian Aymara and introduces the community element. Together, Sumak Kawsay express un buen convivir o un buen vivir (a people living with integrity). El Salvador joined this political force and adapted un buen vivir into their agenda. Some of the invaluable programs in the FMLN's agenda included the daily glass of milk to young students in public schools, the creation of women and youth centers such as Ciudad Mujer and Instituto de la Juventud (INJUVE), as well as small pensions to the elderly and support to farmers.

However, the left hand of the state (social programs) was met with the right hand of the state (punitive policies). Here is where the contradiction lies: one cannot promote a good living for some and physical repression for others—unless the latter are perceived and treated as non-citizens, and hence rationalized as undeserving of social welfare and inclusion in which case violence against them becomes justified and *exceptional*. As a leftist sympathizer, I was profoundly conflicted at the punitive and repressive stance the FMLN took against gangs. Did not the FMLN fight against militarized repression during the civil war? Does not the FMLN want peace? The answer is not so simple. In conversing with Armenta García—a public school teacher under the Del Valley School District, a predominantly Latinx high school located seven miles to the East of Austin, he eloquently expressed a similar enigma, "How did they [the FMLN] become the same repressive presence that they were supposed to replace?" (Armenta García 2019). As previously stated, the puzzle is clear but the answer is not so simple.

While some leftist politicians have condemned gangs and even justified violence against gangs (I could name a few names off top of my head whom I shared personal communication with regarding this topic), some others, like former FMLN militant Raúl Mijango, have proposed peaceful means to eradicate gangs without the need to stage a state-sponsored war against gangs. In 2012, Mijango became one of the facilitators in a dialogue and cease of fire between the two rival gangs in El Salvador. Namely, the MS-13 and the Barrio 18. In this dialogue, the leadership ("voceros") from both gangs came to the realization that they are killing their own people, and wanted to put an end to this; so they made a call to politicians, Salvadoran society and international organizations to support them as they sought to put an end to homicides and other gang-related activities. To do so they proposed a list of demands and alternatives (see table 6). During this time, homicide rates decreased from fourteen a day to 5.5 daily, but fewer data is available on the prevalence of gang-sponsored extortions and is unknown regarding rapes during this time.

(Top and bottom) Mosignor Fabio Colindres blessing pandilleros.

Such drastic decrease in homicides shows that these types of killings can be reduced if the gangs involved in these actions decided to stop the killings. A strong statement was made. Unfortunately, such dialogue—which rapidly gained notoriety as a 'truce'—did not work (perhaps because peace is not profitable?). In other words, the

dialogue did not work because the state did not agree on a peace treaty with gangs, and instead the political repression against them not only continued but intensified, as seen with the extraordinary measures. But do not get me wrong, I am not saying gangs should be excused for the violence they reproduce and create. I am aware gangs are violent criminal organizations that have transcended the Salvadoran national border and have won territory and notoriety all over the world. But we already know this. So I am presenting an argument that is often placed at the margins. Thus, what I am saying is that *gangs are not the source of violence*, but a symptom of structural poverty, violence and U.S. imperialist intervention in the region—which can be contextualized within a legacy of colonialism. In the end, the dialogue lost the little support it had received, and Mijango was jailed for 'facilitating an illegal act' (Dudley 2018). Future research may shed light on the religious actors such as Monsignor Fabio Colindres who facilitated this dialogue, and the role liberation theology plays in the neoliberal era. In the end, it appeared as if the state 'abandoned' gang members and instead gangs were met with repression in the consecutive years.

Presently, the FMLN is the only political party that is committed to advancing social programs and legislatures that benefit historically marginalized communities over transnational corporations and neoliberal projects. However, it is also an entity that has yet to challenge their own personal and political biases toward gangs. My role as a Salvadoran diasporic youth in the United States is to continue to hertoricize the birth of gangs, problematize repression by state agents, propose peaceful alternatives to the gang phenomenon, and encourage the FMLN militancy to seriously hear us out — the dissidents – about our analyses on public security and gangs.

In writing this thesis, I acknowledge the political repercussions that can come from proposing peaceful alternatives and solutions to the gang phenomenon in El Salvador, and in the Central American region at large. In El Salvador, one can be accused of collaborating with 'terrorists' for the simple act of proposing more humanistic alternatives than political repression. This thesis may in fact be the type of analysis that could be labeled as dissident. And it is. This thesis reflects a dissident voice because it proposes that one effective way to decrease gang-related crimes and violence is neither through militarized policing nor political violence, but through the eradication of systematic poverty and violence from its foundations via feminist anti-racist projects. In other words, the killings of and between gang members can be theorized as genocide in the so-called 'global south.' Therefore, a feminist anti-racist framework can provide more complex articulations of gang-related violence and state repression that transcend the current exocitized theorizations of urban violence in El Salvador.

As I get closer to the end of this writing, I write my closing statement fearing that my readers will perceive me to be a romantic or an idealist. And that is okay. It is okay to be an intellectual and have dreams for a better future, otherwise, why do we study the issues that matter to us? With that being said, I believe another society *is* possible, but one cannot envision a better society without the inclusion and participation of the people who have been labeled as undesirable and undeserving of life, dignity and integrity in El Salvador, *and this includes gang members*. My dream is that one day gang members will become agents of personal healing and empowerment as well as political agents of change. Namely, I dream that with the support of society they will examine their own toxic masculinity and will challenge the dehumanizing ruling of the Salvadoran elite and US-sponsored neoliberal projects. Lastly, I hope one day we realize it is best to move forward and not backward. A backward move has already been made

and it consisted in the re-militarization of the police and public security in a postwar era. This move is not a peaceful mean for a peaceful end; instead it only reaps what it seeks to eradicate: violence.

Table 6: Some of the demands and alternatives proposed by members of the MS-13 and Barrio 18 during the gang truce

List of demands	List of Alternatives
➢ Stop the physical attack by the Armed Forces of El Salvador (FAES) during detention processes ➢ Stop the shooting by the FAES when gang members run when they notice the agents' presence ➢ That the prison system in El Salvador stops being a violator of human rights	-Give access to necessary materials to remove graffiti allusive to gangs (i.e. paintings and brushes) -Form spaces where veterans and non-active members share their testimonies to the youth since they do not want the same life for their children -Municipalities Sanctuaries / Prevention Plan Where gangs promise to: a. Promote no aggression between gang members b. Reduce homicides, extortions, robberies, kidnappings c. Surrender their weapons voluntarily Police promises to: d. Not criminalize gang members or their families The State promises to: e. Give access to employment opportunities for young people who come from economically marginalized and socially excluded communities f. Integrate gang members into community groups for local development g. Give access to mental health h. Promote cultural education initiatives in schools i. Install a criminological observatory integrated by the residents of the colonies j. Promote sports, culture, arts and recreation

Source: Mijango 2013

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